Malaysia allows Misuari to see wife, kids

STORY ON PAGE A2

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I'M COMPATIBLE WITH A WASHING MACHINE PERSON

Fortune telling booms

THE END of the year is always a good time for the fortune telling business.

In Japan these days, many folks are divin-

FORTUNE/ A16

WHAT'S INSIDE

- **Abra town mayor killed**
  ACROSS / A11
- **5 Nur loyalists die in attack**
  ACROSS / A11
- **Manufacturing down 10.1%**
  BUSINESS / B1
- **India, Pakistan exchange fire**
  WORLD / A9

GMA names press exec information gatekeeper

BY DONA Z. PAZZIBUGAN AND CARLITO PABLO

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo appears bent on putting her house in order.

For one, she has gone ahead and put up a "clearinghouse" for department press releases, advertisements and other messages to the media, pursuant to her Memorandum Order No. 49 dated Dec. 13.

The memorandum stipulated that all these documents would have to "first be coordinated" with Press Undersecretary for Broadcast Manuel Sanchez.

For another, she has ordered the setting up of units in government agencies whose task, according to an official Malacañang statement, is not only to set "ethical and com-

GMA/ A18

NO, President Macapagal and her husband, Mike Arroyo, are not getting ready to slug it out with one another but warming up in the nippy Baguio clime before a round of golf on Thursday. EDWIN BACASMAS

Six Swiss banks break agreement to help RP

BY DONNA S. CUETO

SIX banks in Switzerland, which confirmed in 1986 that they were keeping Marcos accounts, continue to hold back documents from the Philippine government about the accounts, violating an earlier agreement that they would cooperate with the Philippines.

The banks were identified as Schweizerischer Bankverein, Basel; Armand Von Ernst & Cie AG, Bern; Schweizerische Volksbank, also in Bern; Banque Gutzwiller, Kurz, Bungener SA, Geneva; Chemical Bank (Suisse) SA, also in Geneva; and Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corp., HK, Zurich branch.

The Presidential Commission on

SIX/ A14

Ramos sees 'gray area'

'SC must rule on reelection of ex-presidents'

BY CARLITO PABLO AND JULIET L. JAVELLANA

FIDEL V. Ramos maintains that he is not seeking another term, but he thinks the "constitutional gray area" on whether an ex-president can run for reelection has to be legally tested.

"That must still be tested so that the Supreme Court can come out with a ruling or jurisprudence on the matter," Ramos said yesterday in an interview over dzRH. It was the former President who called the radio station.

The 1987 Constitution does not contain a provision barring an ex-president from running again "after an interruption of six years," Ramos noted, adding that there were three former Presidents—Corazon Aquino, Joseph Estrada and himself—"who can test this constitutional gray area."

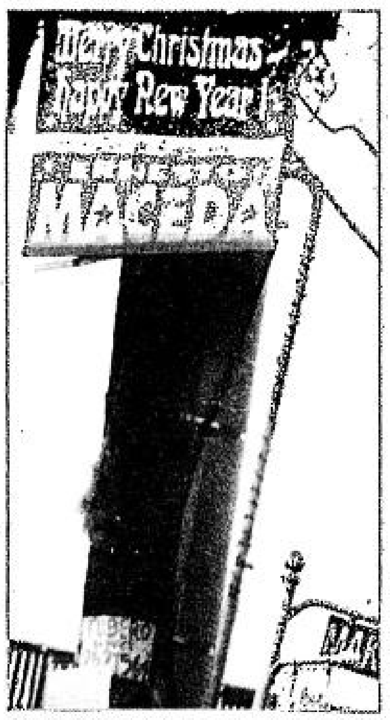
"That's all I'm saying, but I am not about to do that," he said.

Nevertheless, he described himself as a physically fit 72-year-old, and said "it's a great honor to be looked upon as another rival of a much younger set of leaders."

Deputy Speaker Raul M. Gonzales, a stalwart of Ramos' party Lakas, agreed that there was no legal impediment for another run for the ex-President.

"(But) it would show that he is not really a statesman with all the good intentions (if he decides to

RAMOS/ A16



VAL HANDUMON

SIGN OF THINGS TO COME? The name is familiar but its proliferation in Manila's 4th district surprises.

Osama returns to haunt world via Al-Jazeera

DUBAI—Osama bin Laden returned Thursday to the world's television screens, provoking new anger in Washington and a haunting reminder of the terror attacks of Sept. 11.

But the Islamic warrior, once cloaked in an aura of seeming invincibility, appears a shadow of his former confident self in the four-minute and 40-second extract broadcast overnight by Qatar's Al-Jazeera satellite channel.

Black bags hang under his eyes and his once unblemished appearance has given way to a drawn look.

Bin Laden, a Kalashnikov rifle at his side, repeatedly licks his dry lips, most probably dating the tape to Ramadan, the Muslim fasting month that ended on Dec. 15.

Al-Jazeera promised a full 33-minute version would be broadcast around 1830 GMT on Thursday, but none of the previous threats of more terror against the West were renewed in the first extract.

Accusations of a "fierce crusade against Islam" and praise for terrorism, however, were enough to ensure a swift riposte from the White House.

"Our terrorism against America deserves to be praised because it was a response to injustice, aimed at forcing America to stop its support for Israel, which kills our people," said Bin Laden, dressed in combat fatigues.

"This is nothing more than the same kind of terrorist propaganda we've heard before," said White House spokesperson Scott McClellan.

"Our views on Bin Laden are well known," said a dismissive US Department of State official.

The Pentagon decided to hold fire and a spokesperson said the defense department did not have a comment.

Washington's attempts to censor such "propaganda" continued with a US official, who requested anonymity, saying President George W. Bush's administration stood by

OSAMA/ A14

MINUS an antler and with a gaping wound in its left foreleg, this male deer in Cagayan Valley can be made whole again at the Central Luzon State University in Muñoz, Nueva Ecija. VAL HANDUMON

Wounded deer waits for Santa

BY TESSA R. SALAZAR

A WOUNDED young deer tied to an electric post beside a highway somewhere in the cold, misty mountain passes of Cagayan Valley greeted a group of INQUIRER mountaineers three days before Christmas.

Its left foot was mangled and its right antler chopped off.

We tried to play Santa and save its life. We failed in our first attempt.

I was driving the group to a holiday sojourn in Sagada, Mountain Province that Saturday morning.

Seven hours into the trip, along Dalton Pass and right after a rock shed, the deer caught our attention.

It was an endangered young male

WOUNDED/ A18

Terrorism takes spotlight away from new China

YEAR-ENDER

BEIJING—The coveted 2008 Olympic bid came through.

Membership in the World Trade Organization quickly followed suit. And even that nerve-racking spy plane dispute with the United States was resolved without Beijing's leaders backing down and losing face.

But if China, flushed with pride at its ascendant global profile, expected 2002 to be its bragging year on the Asian stage, a convulsing world had other plans.

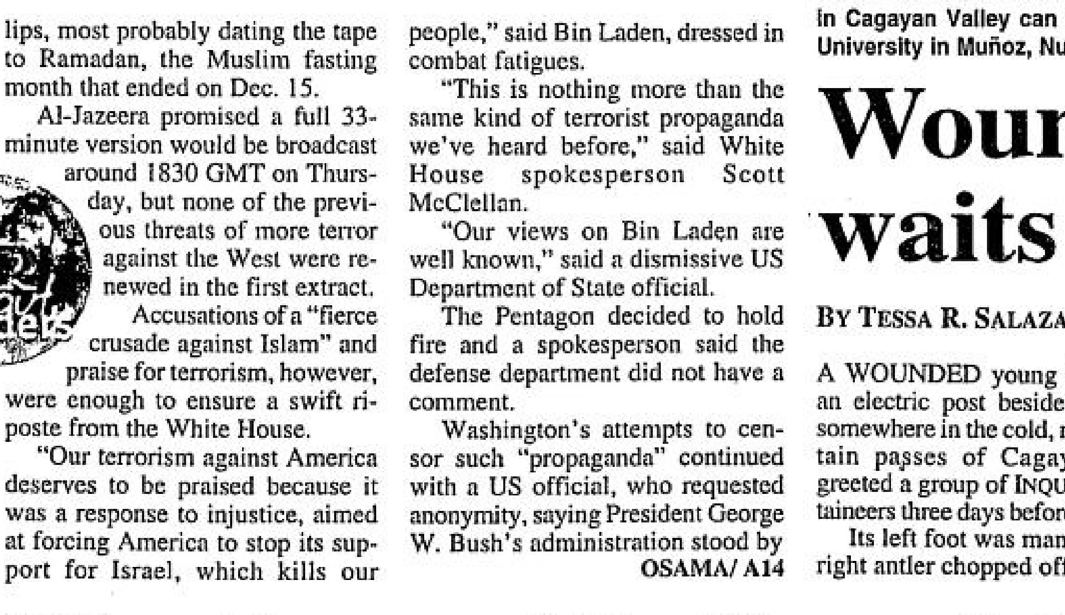
Asia's behemoth has been upstaged, and the continent's watchword for the upcoming year is, predictably, terrorism.

Muslim movements from the high-profile—Afghanistan, Pakistan, India's Kashmir region—to the less-noticed—Indonesia, the Philippines—are snatching headlines from economic convulsions that have dominated recent years.

Topping the list is Afghanistan, where a delicate provisional government is trying to take hold after the ruling Taliban militia crumbled at the hands of American and Afghan opposition forces.

TERRORISM/ A14

Playing with fire child's play



"ONE of the most hazardous and worst forms of child labor," the International Labor Organization defines these children's work in a pyrotechnic factory in Bocaue, Bulacan. JOAN BONDOC

BY CHRISTINE HERRERA

PLAYING with fire is child's play in Bocaue, Bulacan.

Jomel Gerez, 11, Marjon Manlapas, 14, and Mark Daniel Buenaflor, 14, make firecrackers. But with a wrong stroke of the hammer used in making the specially crafted pyrotechnics, these could explode in their faces.

Their lives are on the line for only P30 to P50, the amount they earn for every 1,000 pieces of *kuwitis* they make for one whole day.

Their job has been explicitly defined in the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 182 as "one of the hazardous and worst forms of child labor." Which prompted US Labor Attaché Richard Nelson to visit the boys yesterday.

"I've seen the children working in very hazardous condition. There is still a lot of work to be done here," Nelson said.

The boys the American official saw will probably grow up doing the same highly dangerous

PLAYING/ A18

BUHAY PA SIYA!

Wife sees Misuari, seeks asylum in KL

MALAYSIAN authorities took a wife of Nur Misuari to see him Thursday at the secret location where he is being detained, the Misuaris' lawyer said.

It would be the first time since he was arrested in Malaysia on Nov. 24 after fleeing a pocket rebellion he ignited in Sulu that Misuari would be seen by an outsider.

At the same time, Misuari's wife, Tarhata Ibrahim, asked the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees office in Malaysia to grant her asylum because she feared for her safety, the lawyer, Elly Pamatong, said.

Ibrahim, one of Misuari's three wives, and their three children are in Malaysia hoping to see him.

"She is formally turning herself and her three children over to the custody and protection of the UNHCR," Pamatong said in a statement Thursday.

'Grave danger'

"Mrs. Misuari and her children... believe their lives would be in grave danger in the Philippines because she is the wife of MNLF chair Nur P. Misuari," he added.

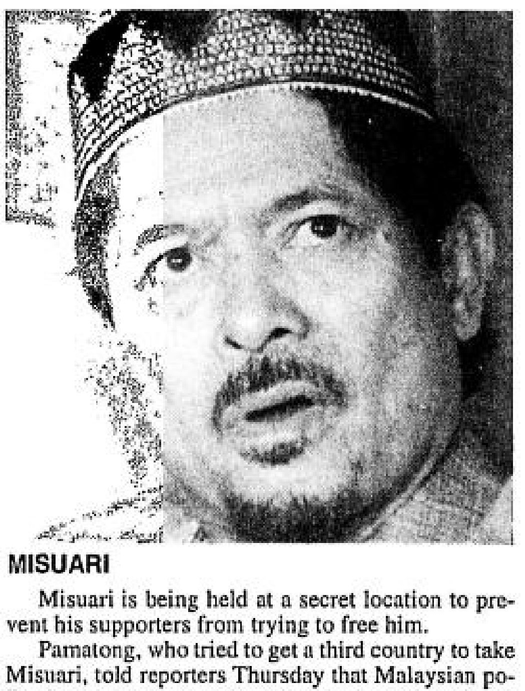
Misuari, former governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, was arrested in Malaysia along with six supporters from the Moro National Liberation Front that he once headed.

Days before, Misuari had led his renegade followers in a revolt aimed at disrupting the elections to choose his successor.

Pamatong said Misuari's wife wants to be resettled in the United States or Britain and has also asked the UNHCR to consider her husband's application for political asylum.

UNHCR officials could not be reached for comment.

On Monday, Malaysia ruled out any chance of asylum for Misuari and said it expects to send him back to Manila next month.



MISUARI

Misuari is being held at a secret location to prevent his supporters from trying to free him.

Pamatong, who tried to get a third country to take Misuari, told reporters Thursday that Malaysian police had agreed to let Misuari receive a visit from his wife and their children.

Plainclothesmen, who did not speak to reporters, drove up to the hotel where the family had been staying since Tuesday and identified themselves as police come to take them for the visit, Pamatong said.

Misuari's wife said she was "much excited" by the prospect of the visit and climbed into an unmarked van with the children. Pamatong also got into the van, which was followed by a car carrying the family's maid.

Reporters were not allowed to join them. Their destination was unknown and there was no idea how long the visit would last.

Malaysian officials would not confirm the visit was taking place, although Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad had said one should be arranged.

Malaysia has since grown disenchanted with Misuari, saying he spent more time traveling and staying in expensive hotels than trying to bring development to his dirt-poor region.

Ibrahim had said her 60-year-old husband might already be dead since no one had seen him since he was arrested in Sabah on Nov. 24.

'Alive and well'

Presidential spokesperson Rigoberto Tiglao said yesterday, "He's alive and well."

"Misuari is healthy, safe and being given comforts within the boundaries of Malaysian laws," Tiglao said, adding Malacañang received the assurance from the ``highest levels" of the Malaysian government.

Tiglao said Malacañang would insist, however, that a Philippine official be allowed to personally see Misuari.

"It's a matter of diplomatic courtesy and trust," he said.

In another development, Philippine military officials yesterday dismissed reports the American hostages being held by the Abu Sayyaf in Basilan would be released in Malaysia.

"They're still in Basilan. The commanders on the ground are very positive the hostages are still in Upper Maluso," Lt. Gen. Roy Cimatu, Southern Command chief, told defense reporters.

Cimatu said the report about Martin and Gracia Burnham being released in Malaysia—aired over television the other day—could be part of a disinformation campaign to confuse troops involved in the hunt for them. *AP, Reuters, Dona Pazzibugan and Martin P. Marfil*

Boredom, depression take 20-lb. toll on Erap

By VOLT CONTRERAS

BOREDOM and depression throughout eight months in detention have taken about 20 lbs off deposed President Joseph Estrada's brawn, according to his personal physician.

But this was "all good" for the 64-year-old ousted leader, said Dr. Larry Hocson in an interview with the INQUIRER yesterday.

It's beneficial for him for two main reasons, he said: it has taken some hefty load off his painful, arthritic knees, and also favorable "on all aspects of his health."

Estrada's son and co-detainee Jinggoy, he said, has registered a "seesaw" weight pattern: alternately gaining some pounds after a spell of hearty meals then losing some due to his recurring heart problem that required hospital confinement.

For now, the doctor said, Jinggoy has been advised to lose weight following his third and latest cardiac episode occurring earlier this month, when he was again hospitalized for chest pains.

"He (ex-president) himself said that he has significantly lost weight. I don't have the exact measurements now, but going by looks I would say he had shed off about 20 lbs since he got detained," Hocson told the INQUIRER.

He attributes the weight loss to Estrada's boredom and occasional fits of depression that affect his appetite.

Hocson shared these rough health reports on the country's most watched jailbirds whose physical wellness—or the lack of it—has already spawned several court pleadings asking for certain medical privileges.

Of these health-related petitions, those that had been granted so far concerned Estrada's cataract-stricken left eye, and Jinggoy's ailing heart.

The Estradas received treatment for these afflictions in private facilities of their choice. This, despite the fact that their current place of detention is a military hospital in Quezon City.

Pending is Estrada's petition to undergo knee surgery in the US, one that is most strongly opposed by state prosecutors in the plunder case and by militant groups that worked for his overthrow.

Military shrugs off coup rumors

By MARTIN P. MARFIL

THE MILITARY yesterday dismissed talk of a coup as the handiwork of groups trying to force President Macapagal-Arroyo into giving them government posts as "possible saviors" of the administration.

Brig. Gen. Emmanuel Teodosio, the acting military spokesperson, denied the Armed Forces were involved in any coup plot and said the military was firmly behind the Macapagal-Arroyo administration.

"Definitely there is no truth to this. The (military) stands solidly behind the President," Teodosio said.

Teodosio did not name those he claimed were behind the rumors, but said some were linked to government officials "jockeying for positions."

Newspapers have in the past few days carried reports on the coup rumors, which have been doing the rounds for weeks.

The general urged for an end to the rumors saying they were creating panic among the public "and the loser will be our economy which will go down further."

Police officers

Rumors of a coup started after several former rebel military and police officers who had been given posts in the government were relieved.

Some of those who were recently ousted were retired Brig. Gen. Edgardo Abenina, a former Reformed the Armed Forces Movement member, and police Senior Supt. Rafael Cardeño who was transferred to a post in the Visayas region.

Cardeño is the chair of the Young Officers' Union, one of the groups which participated in the 1989 coup attempt against the Aquino administration.

Another theory saying that former President Fidel Ramos was behind the coup plot has been rejected by Malacañang.

Teodosio said he does not believe Ramos planned to seek the presidency again.

"He has always upheld the Constitution and has opposed past coup attempts," Teodosio said.

AFP chief Gen. Diomedio Villanueva said the rumors were perpetuated by "some people who want to keep us off balance."

But he assured the public, "the rumors will stay as (mere) rumors."

Sen. Gregorio "Gringo" Honasan, who led several unsuccessful coups against the Aquino presidency, said Malacañang should refrain from dignifying coup rumors by making comments.

No evidence

"There is not enough evidence or accurate factual information to warrant any conclusion" that a coup would be staged early next year to topple the Macapagal-Arroyo administration, Honasan said in a press conference.

While he believed that public confidence in the country's democratic institutions was "at its lowest," Honasan said "the situation does not warrant any extra-constitutional change (in government)."

Quoting YOU sources, Minority Leader Carlos Padilla said YOU was not launching any coup against the government.

He said it was possible the coup rumors were being sparked by people seeking to obtain favors from Ms Macapagal.

He also denied reports that the opposition was behind the coup rumors.

Discipline

Two Lakas congressmen yesterday urged the President to impose discipline on some members of the ruling party who are allegedly sowing intrigues within the administration.

Deputy Speaker Raul Gonzalez (Iloilo City) and Rep. Jose Apolinario Lozada Jr. (Negros Occidental) said that rumors about coup plots and the alleged reelection bid of Ramos were coming not from the opposition but from "disgruntled" members of the ruling party.

"This is the result of some people belonging to Lakas (and) close to FVR who are disgruntled... They are sulking because they were not given positions in the administration and they keep on telling stories left and right. When these are magnified in the media, it becomes a matter of destabilization," Gonzales said.

Gonzales cited Ramos' budget secretary Salvador Enriquez.

"(Enriquez) seems to be the most vocal among these people and he is politically cohabiting with this (Linda) Montayre and so you could say he has a hidden selfish agenda," Gonzalez said.

Enriquez, who is now employed by Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr., who is a Lakas official, reportedly wanted to be appointed chair of the Commission on Audit when Ms Macapagal became President.

But Lozada said the criticisms from Lakas members were not meant to divide the party.

He said the President should heed these voices and reach out to them.

But Gonzalez believes it's time the President cracked the whip.

"There should be discipline within the party and then we should close ranks," he said.

He said Ramos should also "tell his people to shut up," particularly Enriquez.

He said Belmonte and Speaker Jose de Venecia should also check Enriquez. ***With reports from Juliet Labog-Javellana, Rocky Nazareno and Christine Avendaño***

PNP chief to serve summons on Ping

By TJ BURGONIO

DIRECTOR General Leandro Mendoza, chief of the Philippine National Police, yesterday vowed to serve this week summons on Sen. Panfilo Lacson in connection with a civil case filed against him by a businesswoman over a failed handcuffs deal.

Mendoza said that he just needed "to coordinate" with Justice Secretary Hernando Perez and Director Reynaldo Wycoco of the National Bureau of Investigation before serving the summons.

The summons was addressed to Mendoza, Perez and Wycoco. Still, it would be the PNP that would serve the summons on Lacson, former PNP chief, either at his residence or at the Senate, he said.

When asked when the summons would be served, Mendoza said: "Anytime, this week."

The Superior Court of California in Alameda County issued the summons to Lacson in connection with a $3 million civil case filed by businesswoman Blanquita Pelaez on Dec. 10, giving him 30 days to file a "typewritten response."

Pelaez sued Lacson and 30 John Does "for intentional interference with economic relationship, slander and emotion distress."

The case arose from the non-payment of 41,297 handcuffs ordered by the PNP in December 1996 from Smith and Wesson Co., where Pelaez worked as the exclusive supplier.

Pelaez's lawyer, Rodel Rodis, forwarded a copy of both the summons and the complaint to Mendoza and Perez with a request that they serve the summons.

Pelaez charged that Lacson had approached her in August 1999 and promised that he would approve the payment of the handcuffs if she supports his bid to become PNP chief.

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Travel advisories a wake-up call–Oreta

BY CYNTHIA D. BALANA AND NORMAN BORDADORA

THE NEW advisories issued recently by five countries against travel to Mindanao should serve as a wake-up call for the government to get tough in the peace and order front.

Sen. Teresa Aquino-Oreta made the statement after the United States, Great Britain, France, Canada and Japan issued new advisories to their citizens against visiting parts of Mindanao because of the security situation there.

Oreta said it was time Malacañang addressed the peace and order problem in order to alter the country's image abroad as a violent place.

"The travel bans will have an adverse impact not only on the country's tourism industry, but on investor confidence," Oreta said.

"The simultaneous negative travel advisories issued by countries considered primary sources of tourists and foreign investments for the Philippines should serve as a strong impetus for Malacañang to stop waffling on pressing peace and order concerns," she said.

For his part, Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon welcomed the travel advisories, saying they were an improvement over the sweeping warnings issued earlier against travel to the Philippines.

"The new advisories were well-taken. This time the advisories were against certain areas in the south. Davao City was not included," Gordon told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview yesterday.

"They are focused on Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-tawi and the areas around Zamboanga," the country's top salesman and cheerleader said.

The Department of Tourism's yearend report had suggested that incidences of local terrorism be downplayed in the world media in order to boost international tourist arrivals next year and 2003—Visit the Philippines Year.

The World Tourism Organization, the influential group of travel industry leaders worldwide, has declared 2003 as Visit the Philippines Year.

"I don't want to restructure media coverage, but we have to help each other. For instance, we ourselves don't go to Sulu, we don't go to Tawi-tawi," Gordon said. "These are places that people usually don't go to for tourism purposes and that affects the country's (other) tourist destinations."

Gordon said the government's priority in placing the lives of Americans Martin and Gracia Burnham and Filipino Deborah Yap over a quick solution to the hostage crisis is seriously affecting the country's image abroad.

"What can we do about it? Do we go in and cause the deaths of the hostages? Certainly not," he said.

Even with last week's rescue of a kidnapped Canadian citizen, the Canadian Embassy on Wednesday warned its citizens against traveling to Basilan and certain parts of Mindanao.

The US Embassy, on the other hand, warned Americans about going to Basilan and other parts of Mindanao, following the abduction of the Burnham couple.

The French issued warnings against travel to Basilan, Tawi-tawi, Zamboanga del Norte and Zamboanga del Sur.

The British Embassy advised its citizens not to go to Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, Sultan Kudarat, North Cotabato, South Cotabato, Bukidnon, Basilan, Tawi-tawi, Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga del Norte.

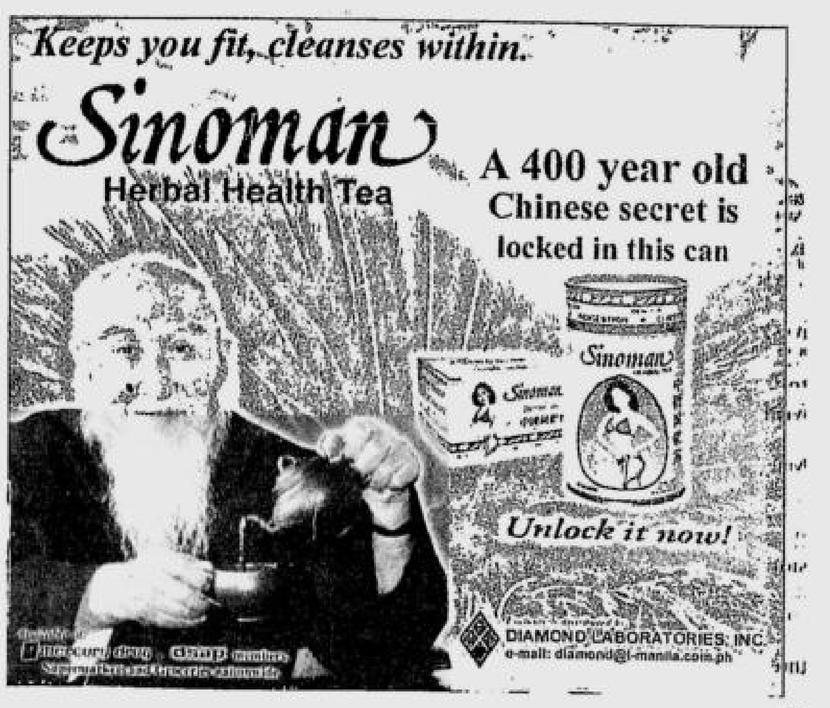
Oreta said that one issue that needs a strong response from Malacañang is the repatriation of rebel leader Nur Misuari who is being held in a Malaysian jail.

Misuari had fled to Malaysia following attacks by his followers last month on army detachments in Jolo, Sulu.

Oreta said that a resolute stance in the Misuari case would show the world that the government reacts strongly to any national security threat.

She said Malacañang cannot blame the foreign countries for issuing travel bans because recent attacks by both Muslim and communist rebels have bolstered the perception of chaos in the country.

"Bringing Misuari home at once to face rebellion and graft charges would show to the world, and the business community, that the Macapagal government is tough on terrorism and crime," she said.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Visa-free entry for Sinos starts

VICE President and Foreign Affairs Secretary Teofisto Guingona Jr. has paved the way for easing travel restriction between the People's Republic of China and the Philippines with the launching of the first visa-free entry of Chinese nationals through the country's northernmost door in Laoag City.

Through this scheme, any Chinese visitor may enter the country where a visa on arrival will be issued to him. Only a certification from the consul general in the visitor's country of origin is required.

The launching at the grand reopening of Fort Ilocandia Resort and Casino was attended by Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, Rep. Roque Ablan, Ilocos Norte Gov. Bongbong Marcos, Ambassador to China Josue Villa, Chinese Ambassador Wang Chung Gui and hundreds of guests from the mainland China and Taiwan.

Major destination

The new policy of visa upon arrival was approved after long consultations with the Department of Tourism and the Bureau of Immigration. Guingona attributed the relaxation of travel restriction between the two countries to Representative Ablan who worked hard for its realization.

Because of this development, Laoag City became an overnight major tourist destination that might soon outstrip Boracay as the country's prime tourist spot. There are now 23 regular flights from the mainland China, including Hong Kong, Shanghai and Macao, and Taiwan.

There are now direct flights from Manila, Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Xiemen, Guilin, all in the mainland, and Kaohsiung and Taipei in Taiwan.

VISA-FREE ANNOUNCEMENT. Vice President and Foreign Secretary Teofisto Guingona Jr. officially opens visa upon entry to Chinese nationals. Others in photo are (from left) Ilocos Norte Rep. Roque Ablan, Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon and Fort Ilocandia Hotel General Manager Christ Park.

Guingona said that this would open more business opportunities to the people in the Ilocos. He said that from Laoag, Chinese visitors would trickle into neighboring Ilocos provinces and farther to Tuguegarao and the Mt. Province.

Ablan said that some P350 million was spent for the renovation of the Laoag International Airport in preparation for more tourist arrivals from China. He said Fort Ilocandia was refurbished to admit more guests.

Now a subsidiary of the Jimei Hotels International Ltd., the 280-room Fort Ilocandia boasts of a resort and casino and a 18-hole golf and country club designed by Gary Player.

He said that there are many historical and tourist sites in the province, including Paoay Church, the Malacañang of the North and the historic Spanish town of Vigan City.

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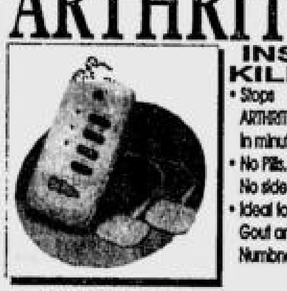
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Tourism in 2001: Crippled by terror

GOVERNMENT efforts to improve tourism peaked thrice this year, only to be wrecked by the "crippling and chilling effects" of banditry and terrorism, according to the Department of Tourism's yearend report.

But the department still sees bright prospects next year with the lowering of travel advisories imposed by various countries against the Philippines, as well as the success of international efforts to combat terrorism in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

The DOT said the administration's "strategic spadework and diligent homework" served to boost tourism's immense potential as a generator of income and employment.

The department said that tourism had shown strength this year by "its ability to climb up from adverse developments affecting the industry."

Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon initiated crucial programs ranging from advocating the development of a national culture of tourism to a promotional overseas blitz that highlighted tourists' safety and the pleasurable experiences that the country offered.

The year's arrival graphs, however, showed three crests and troughs, with most arrival rates in the negative.

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BSP: Money watchdog didn't reject RP law

THE CENTRAL bank said yesterday that a global watchdog agency for money laundering had not rejected the Philippines' proposed legislation to crack down on the practice.

A newspaper had reported that the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) had deemed a recently passed Philippine anti-laundering law insufficient because a threshold set for reporting deposits was too high.

Speaking on the ANC television channel, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura said the FATF had merely raised some questions about the new legislation, which it wanted the government to clarify.

"They have merely supplied us with some preliminary observations on possible deficiencies of the law particularly since Sept. 11 (the terrorist attacks on the United States)... but it is not correct to say that the FATF has rejected the law."

He said the Paris body has asked the government to respond to its observations, but no final ruling on the law will be made until after a plenary meeting of the FATF scheduled for next February.

The FATF had required the Philippines to draw up a law to combat money laundering by Sept. 30 this year in order to be removed from a blacklist of non-cooperative countries and to avoid international sanctions.

Congress approved the law the day before the deadline.

The newspaper said the FATF was concerned that the P4 million threshold trigger for banks to automatically report deposits was too high and could be used as a loophole by those seeking to launder the proceeds of illegal activities.

"The threshold amount is only for the purpose of requiring a monitoring of the account, if the transaction is suspicious to begin with the banks have the right not to accept the deposit but to report it," Buenaventura said.

He added that the FATF's concerns can be addressed through adjustments to the new law's implementing rules and regulations which were still being reviewed by a congressional committee.

"Maybe some of the shortcomings (perceived by FATF) can be corrected through the implementing rules and regulations... rather than a change in the law," Buenaventura said.

Government officials plan to meet FATF representatives in January to try and iron out a solution, he said.

Buenaventura added that while there was no specific reference to terrorism in the law, activities associated with this crime were included.

"The activities related to terrorism are already there—hijacking, kidnapping, drugs," he said.

Reacting to the alleged rejection of the anti-money laundering law by the FATF, Sen. Teresa Aquino-Oreta accused the government's economic team of failing to do their homework and tricking Congress into passing the law to remove the Philippines from the FATF's blacklist of non-cooperative countries.

Oreta said that during the congressional deliberations on the measure she had warned Malacañang that mere passage of the law might not be enough to get the Philippines removed from the blacklist.

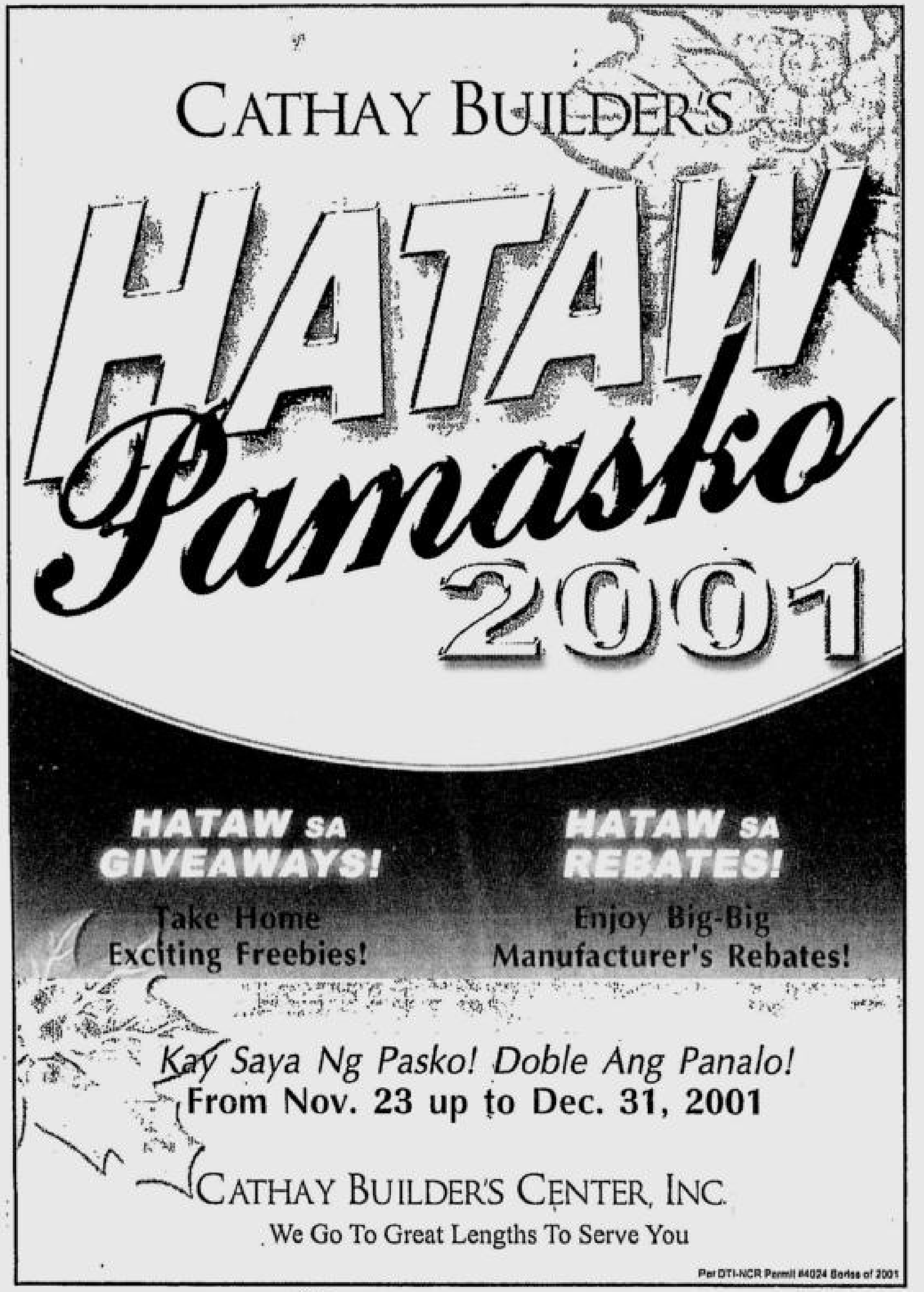
"The rejection, if true, bolsters my earlier position that Malacañang's economic team had foisted a grand deception on the Congress that even a hastily enacted measure was enough to free the Philippines from FATF-imposed economic sanctions," Oreta said.

She said her own research showed that at least 8 other countries remain on the FATF blacklist even if they had similarly complied with FATF requirements.

She recalled that when the anti-money laundering law was passed three months ago, Cabinet officials declared that passage of the measure was enough to comply with the FATF requirements. They expected that the Philippines would be removed from the blacklist when the task force convened in February.

Oreta also pointed out that at the time the law was passed, the Philippines still had to meet six other conditions before it could be considered for removal from the blacklist.

AFP with a report from Cynthia Balana



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DOTC chief eyes maritime reforms

TRANSPORTATION Secretary Pantaleon Alvarez said there is a great need to introduce much-needed reforms in the maritime industry to make it more responsive to the needs of the new millennium.

"It is ironic that while the Philippines supplies the biggest share of seafarers in the world maritime industry, we have produced some of the worst maritime accidents," Alvarez said.

The DOTC's implementing arm in the maritime is the Philippine Coast Guard.

One of the first reforms of the transportation department is the lowering of freights to help the public and the business sector, Alvarez said.

Another continuing campaign of the Coast Guard is preventing overloading in sea-going vessels, which accounts for more than 50 percent of maritime accidents.

Alvarez said the Coast Guard has been rigorous in inspecting incoming and departing vessels to ensure they do not go exceed passenger capacity.

Such potential accidents, Alvarez said, are always present during peak season when passengers overcrowd vessels, overstretching the capacity of departing ships.

But he said, however, the program cannot succeed without the full cooperation from both the ship owners and the commuting public.

"Cooperation is necessary because the Coast Guard cannot be breathing down the necks of ship owners all the time," Alvarez added.

Cavite squatters to get own homes

FROM FEAR and hopelessness to a new lease on life for the New Year.

That's what in store to some 3,500 squatter families in Rosario, Cavite, who have lived in fear for several months now as they dreaded ejection and demolition of their homes following the issuance of an order by the regional trial court in Cavite finding their occupancy of the government owned land illegal.

Recently, in keeping with President Macapagal-Arroyo's housing for the poor and poverty alleviation program, Filoil Management and Development Corp. (FMDC), a real estate arm of the Philippine National Oil Co. (PNOC), has embarked on a P100-million socialized housing project for the affected 3,500 squatter families on what used to be the old Filoil Refinery site in Rosario, Cavite.

According to PNOC president Thelmo Cunanan, more than 25 hectares of the 118-hectare Filoil property has been earmarked for the socialized housing project which is part of the overall thrust of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration to alleviate poverty in the country.

Filoil president and chief executive officer Cirilo Martinez said the project's implementation is being undertaken by virtue of Executive Order No. 59 signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo recently.

He said the housing project is being implemented jointly with the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) under Housing Secretary Michael Defensor with Assistant Secretary Rado Dimalibot as the project's coordinating official for the HUDCC.

Martinez said the initial effort aims to construct 500 low-cost housing units in two phases. Construction work has already started for the first 143 housing units in a one-hectare site. Each housing unit will have an area of 40 sq. m.

2001 YEAR-END REPORT DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

"BAWAT GRADUATE, BAYANI AT MARANGAL"

The Department of Education (DepEd) served its main constituencies, the teachers and students, by raising the academic standards of basic education and enhancing administrative efficiency in the delivery of educational services.

1. *Empowering Teachers*

The DepEd made half a million public school teachers operate at the optimum by giving them a healthier cash flow.

1.1 Increased the Take Home Pay. The DepEd stopped deductions on teacher's salaries for such items as loss of textbooks by their students, excessive X-ray fees, shortfalls in collection of fees that were subsequently declared illegal and unauthorized deductions by private lending agencies. It withdrew the deduction code of the agency with the most number of complaints and is auditing another. It increased the take home pay by giving clothing allowance in cash instead of in textile as in the past.

To alleviate the teacher's financial difficulties, the DepEd got approval from the Department of Finance not to withhold taxes from May 1 to June 15. This increased take home pay before school opening when teachers are in greater need of funds. For the first time in many years, refunds for claims were released by the Bureau of Internal Revenue to an initial 8,000 teachers.

1.2 Checkless Payroll System. To avoid delays in salaries and minimize the need for teachers to borrow, the DepEd outsourced payroll. As of December, some 25,000 teaching and non-teaching personnel receive their salaries through the banks. Sixty per cent of DepEd personnel is expected to be covered by end of next year.

1.3 Loan Restructure. To institutionalize the gains, the DepEd and the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding providing a P5 billion loan restructuring facility. This will be used to pay off teachers' debt borrowed at effective interest rates of 36 % to 108 % (Findings of Rep. Jesli Lapus' Inquiry) to GSIS' effective interest rate of 12 %. This loan facility for teaching and non-teaching personnel is on top of GSIS' existing salary loan window.

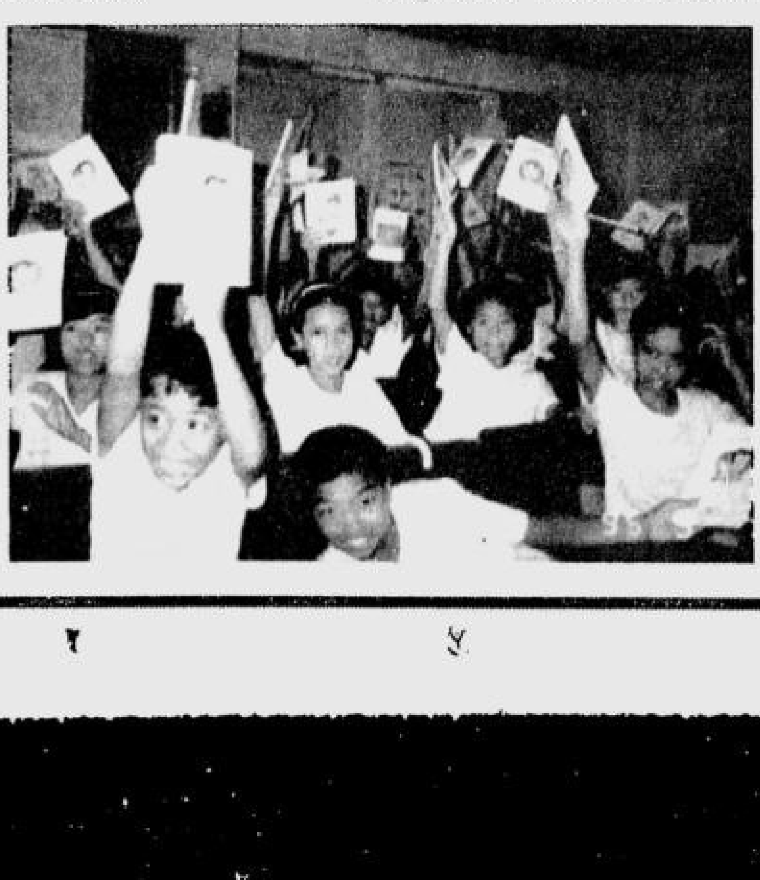
The consequent increase in the teachers' take home pay aims to make their salaries a leverage for housing and other more productive loans.

1.4 Increase in Election Per Diem. For the national elections last May, the DepEd worked to increase from P800 to P900 the per diem teachers receive from the Commission on Elections. To avoid delays in the payment of teachers, the DepEd stipulated that teachers be given half their per diem on election day and be paid directly by the COMELEC. The DepEd increased from three to five days the number of service credits teachers gain for rendering election duty.

1.5 Freeing Teachers to Teach. The DepEd has freed teachers of many non-teaching duties so that they can concentrate on instruction and preparation for their classes. It advocated that teachers be freed of election duties to separate education from politics.

1.6 Teacher Trainings. More than 70,000 teachers and non-teaching personnel were trained on short-term courses. Another 619 teachers and non-teaching personnel were given scholarships: mostly on science and math courses.

1.7 Helping Private School Teachers. The DepEd helped private school teachers continue teaching until they could take the Licensure Examination pending the resolution of legal issues.. This ensured the smooth opening of classes in private schools. The same assistance was extended to private preschool teachers.



The DepEd called for the Professional Regulations Commission to take corrective measures in the Licensure Exam for Teachers after examinees complained of various errors. The DepEd has also brought in the inputs of the private sector in curriculum reform and in educational policy planning.

2. *Serving the Students*

2.1 Free Access to the Schools. Enrolment in SY 2001-2002 increased by some five per cent. This is a result of implementing for the first time the Ganzon Law (RA 5546) banning the collection of compulsory contributions. The presentation of a birth certificate which became a hindrance to enrollment was waived. Feedback from parents revealed that the implementation of the law allowed all their children to enroll simultaneously instead of by turns.

2.2 Implement No Compulsory Collection. Through the years, collections for the Red Cross, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Anti-TB and various fees amounting to P200 to P1,000 per child were being collected on a compulsory basis. By implementing no compulsory collections throughout the year, DepEd is helping reduce the drop out rate.

2.3 School Building Program. By year-end under the Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP), more than 850 classrooms will be finished. This is three times more than the 274 accomplished in the last two years. More than 1,300 classrooms will be rehabilitated by year-end. This is three times more than the 427 accomplished in the last two years.

2.4 Multi-Grade Education Program. The Framework on the Integrated Curriculum for Multigrade classes was developed. Schools benefited from 47,000 copies of multi-level materials and another 47,800 learning guides in various subjects.

2.5 Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GASTPE). The Fund for Assistance to Private Education (FAPE) estimates that some 280,000 students in private schools benefited from the Education Service Contracting Scheme: 17,000 more than last year. Around 200,000 students are expected to receive Tuition Fee Supplements.

3. *Striving to Improve the Quality of Education*

3.1 Reforming the Curriculum. To improve the quality of education, the DepEd continued the effort to reform the curriculum that began with former Sec. Isidro Carino.

After a series of consultations, the DepEd firmed up the consensus to focus on five learning areas; specifically, English, Filipino, Math, Science, and Makabayan (*Sining, Kultura, Musika, PE, Produktibong Pamumuhay, Edukasyong Pantahanan at Pangkabuhayan, Heograpiya, Kasaysayan, Sibika, Araling Panlipunan, Technology & Home Economics, Health, Character Education*). Social Studies and Values Education will be integrated across the curriculum. By school year 2002, high school math will be shifted from the spiraling approach to the layered curriculum to improve continuity between levels and facilitate ease in teaching.

The reforms will give more time for students to master essential competencies and hone analytical skills. Teacher's modules are already being developed for the changes in high school math.

3.2 Computers for Instruction. A total of 1,107 public high schools have received computers under the DepEd Computerization Program and the DTI-DepEd Personal Computers for Public Schools Project. Interconnectivity is being pursued through these programs and private sector donations. Around 14,400 teachers were trained on the use of computers for classroom management and instruction under public and private initiatives.

3.3 Providing Preschool and Early Childhood Services. The DepEd organized 1,428 preschool classes while another 1,000 were organized under the Preschool Service Contracting Scheme. This benefited 25,000 pupils. The Early Childhood Development Project benefited 522,000 Grade 1 students through improved teaching strategies and the provision of instructional materials.

4. *Equity*

4.1 Health and Nutrition Program. Health and nutrition services were given to Grade 1 pupils in 5th and 6th class municipalities and in the 22 Social Reform Agenda provinces. Grade 1 students were given free milk packs while 50 schools benefited from breakfast feedings. Under the Early Childhood Development Project, 261,000 Grade 1 pupils were dewormed.

A total 2,255 schools with 600,000 students and 87,000 teachers and non-teaching personnel were visited by school health personnel. Around 3.85 million children in 15,100 elementary schools were provided dental services. The Oral Health Program provided services to one million students in 2,309 elementary schools. Eighty per cent or 7.3 million Grade II to VI students were extended nursing services.

Together with the Department of Health, the DepEd launched the Comprehensive School Health Services Program by conducting free physical examinations on school children and teachers.

4.2 Special Education Services. The 133 Special Education (SPED) Centers provided for the needs of the gifted and handicapped students. Enrollment increased from 120,000 last year to 125,283 this year. Some 4,000 braille books and large print materials were distributed to 84 schools and centers.

4.3 Non-Formal Education Services. Non-formal education services were provided to out of school youth and adults. A total 57,288 learners were served under the 126 contracted service providers.

5. *Good Governance*

5.1 Reduced the Cost of Textbooks and Desks. The application of the 'sunshine principle' or transparency in bidding procedures has resulted in cheaper textbooks and desks/armchairs. Textbooks that used to cost from P60 to P80 have been reduced to P21 to P48 per textbook. Desks that used to cost P750 per unit decreased to P485 while armchairs that used to be bought at P600 per unit can now be procured at P240.

Some 25 million textbooks in core subjects and 661,000 teacher's manuals were procured this year. In addition, savings of P400 million generated from efficient biddings will procure an additional 11 to 16 million textbooks. The total number procured is more than double last year's 15.4 million textbooks.

Some 27,000 desks and 13,000 armchairs were procured benefiting an estimated 66,000 students. Another P213 million funded the bidding for 150,000 desks and chairs and 115,000 armchairs;, thus benefiting 418,000 students. Savings of P100 million from this bidding can procure around 250,000 more armchairs next year. None were procured last year.

Greater confidence in bidding procedures from the private sector has widened the supplier base and, together with the partial implementation of the systems contract procurement procedure, has led to a 35% cost reduction in the biddings for school furniture and textbooks. The procurement processing time has been reduced from last year's 9-12 months to 4 months.

5.2 Maximized Sources of Funds. To cope with the budget constraint imposed by the deficit, the DepEd looked towards maximizing alternative sources of funds. It re-energized the implementation of the foreign-assisted P12.4 billion Third Elementary Education Project (TEEP). Begun in 1997, the project was rated unsatisfactory by donors due to bottlenecks in project implementation resulting in a four-year delay and the minimal loan utilization rate resulting in significant commitment fees. Thus, last March 30 2001, the Department of Education signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the donors restructuring the project. Subsequently, at a NEDA meeting with foreign donors, the Department was cited as the model for the project restructuring process and mid-term review. The World Bank lauded the "significant restructuring and simplification of the project."

The TEEP restructuring will enable the DepEd to catch-up with the program's original goals of improving student participation and learning achievement; reducing drop-out rates in the 22 poorest provinces and strengthening the capacity of the Department to deliver education. These outcomes will be achieved by building classrooms, delivering textbooks and school furniture, improving textbook content and teaching capacity under the loan terms and guidelines of the World Bank and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation.

5.3 Cut Red Tape. The DepEd abolished the requirement for seafarers to secure from the Department of Education (DepEd) an authentication of their diplomas, transcript of records and transfer credentials of applicants for a seafarer's course. This reduced the number of signatures Filipino seafarers have to get before deployment overseas.

5.4 Principal Empowerment. Following its belief in strengthening the role and duties of school principals, the DepEd released for the first time the full budget for minor repair and maintenance to the principals for implementation. They were also trained in the TEEP's Principal-led School Building Program and the DepEd is re-organizing to further empower them.

5.5 Increased Public Access. The Office of the Secretary-Proper was reorganized to be more service-friendly. Problems and suggestions of ordinary citizens sent through letters, text messaging, e-mail, by phone and through a weekly radio program were addressed. Telephone hotlines were established during the national elections and school opening to receive and attend to the ordinary citizen's concerns. Central and regional officials acted on complaints by addressing directly the persons mentioned.

5.6 Civil Society Participation. Civil society has been involved in formulating educational policy; specifically in evaluating textbook content, improving teacher's welfare, improving the curriculum and in solving particular problems of public and private schools.

5.7 Non-Commercialization. The DepEd has stopped all official endorsements or accreditation of goods and services as endorsements distort market forces. It ordered that the Department's institutional name and logo will henceforth be used for public purposes only.

'Poor man's university' loses Sta. Mesa lot

BY MICHAEL LIM UBAC

THE SUPREME Court has stripped the Polytechnic University of the Philippines of its rights over a three-hectare government land in Sta. Mesa, Manila, saying the school could not invoke its reputation as the poor man's university to illegally use the land for its expansion projects.

In taking back the property, the court's Second Division stressed that allowing the university to use the property was tantamount to a "travesty of justice."

"Education may be prioritized for legislative or budgetary purposes, but we doubt if such importance can be used to confiscate private property, such as Firestone's right of first refusal," said the Second Division, speaking through Senior Associate Justice Josue N. Bellosillo.

The high court then voided a memorandum order of former President Corazon Aquino transferring the government land to PUP in 1990.

The tribunal directed the National Development Corp. (NDC) to instead sell the land at P1,500 per square meter to Firestone Ceramics Inc., a long-standing lessee, which enjoys the right of first refusal over the property.

The court said it recognized that the PUP, which claims to be the "poor man's university," needed the land to expand its campus so that it could accommodate the growing number of students.

However, the high court stressed that the law "respects the lease contract between the NDC and Firestone."

'Settled principle'

Said the SC: "It is a settled principle in civil law that when a lease contract contains a right of first refusal, the lessor is under the legal duty to the lessee not to sell to anybody at any price until after he has made an offer to sell to the latter at a certain price and the lessee has failed to accept it. The lessee has a right that the lessor's first offer shall be in his favor."

The high tribunal also lectured the PUP's academe for questioning a lower court's ruling favoring Firestone.

"Petitioner PUP should be cautioned against bidding for public sympathy by bewailing the dismissal of its petition before the press. Such advocacy is not likely to elicit the compassion of this Court or any court for that matter.

"A litigation is not simply a contest of litigants before the bar of public opinion; more than that, it is a pursuit of justice through legal and equitable means... Thus, if the court would merely reflect, and worse, succumb to the great pressures of the day, the end result, it is feared, would be a travesty of justice," it said.

Court records showed that in 1965, the NDC leased the three-hectare property to Firestone to establish the latter's ceramic manufacturing business. The lease contract expressly recognized Firestone's "right of first refusal" to purchase the leased property "should the lessor decide to sell the same."

Renewable

The contract stipulates that the 10-year lease contract is renewable for another 10 years. Aside from the three-hectare property, more NDC lots, some of them in Davao, were subsequently leased to Firestone, resulting in the amendments in the lease contract.

The lessor-lessee relationship went on smoothly until 1988 when Firestone informed the NDC of its intention to renew the lease, which expired on Dec. 31, 1989.

However, President Aquino intervened and issued Memorandum Order No. 214 ordering the transfer of the whole NDC compound that was leased to Firestone to the national government. The latter, in turn, would convey the property in favor of PUP.

The NDC needed the conveyance of the property to cancel its P57.2-million debt to the national government.

This started a legal battle, which eventually reached the high court.

Both the trial court and the Court of Appeals had upheld the lease contract between Firestone and NDC. The trial court and the appellate court ordered the PUP to sell the land at P1,500 per square meter, the prevailing market price of the property, to Firestone.

No legal basis

The Supreme Court ruled that there was no legal basis to overturn the lower courts decision, saying "Paradoxically, our paramount interest in education does not license us, or any party for that matter, to destroy the sanctity of binding obligations."

It also slammed NDC for "virtually" selling the whole compound to PUP, including the leased premises, with neither the knowledge nor the consent of Firestone.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, Dec. 28, 2001
Holy Innocents, Martyrs

1st Reading: *1 Jn 5-2:2*
Gospel: *Mt 2:13-18*

After the wise men had left, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you for Herod will soon be looking for the child in order to kill him."

Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and left that night for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. In this way, what the Lord had said through the prophet was fulfilled: *I called my son out of Egypt.*

When Herod found out that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was furious. He gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its neighborhood who were two years old or under. This was done in line with what he had learned from the wise men about the time when the star appeared.

In this way, what the prophet Jeremiah had said was fulfilled: *A cry is heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation: Rachel weeps for her children. She refuses to be comforted, for they are no more.*

Commentary:

We celebrate in the Church the babies who were butchered because of Jesus. Definitely to their wailing mothers, their murder was an irreparable tragedy. Yet today we celebrate it as a great victory for those children. We consider them as the first martyrs for Christ. Often what at first glance seems a loss turns out to be a great gain. This is because God is in control of our history. He can turn any evil into our good. We see this most clearly in Christ's death which spelled our redemption. In today's murder of the innocents, we have a preview of what God will allow to happen later to his own Son. When evil afflicts us, let us turn to god our Vindicator and our weeping will turn to joy.

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

REMEDIAL LAW (CIVIL PROCEDURE)—Test to determine identity of causes of action—The test to determine identity of causes of action is to ascertain whether the same evidence necessary to sustain the second cause of action is sufficient to authorize a recovery in the first, even if the form or nature of the two (2) actions are different from each other. If the same facts or evidence would sustain both, the two (2) actions are considered the same within the rule that the judgment in the former is a bar to the subsequent action; otherwise, it is not. This method has been considered the most accurate test as to whether a former judgment is a bar in subsequent proceedings between the same parties. It has even been designated as infallible. [Citations omitted.] [Justice de Leon, Jr., Second Division, Bangko Silangan Development Bank v. Court of Appeals, G.R. No. 110480, June 29, 2001]

DIGEST BY R.B. VERA

TRIVIA: Do you know where the expression "once in a blue moon" came from? This idiomatic expression, which has come to pertain to anything that happens rarely, traces its roots to an astronomical phenomenon known as the "blue moon", that rare instance when the earth sees two full moons in a span of one month. This happens when the moon's cycle overlaps with our calendar months.

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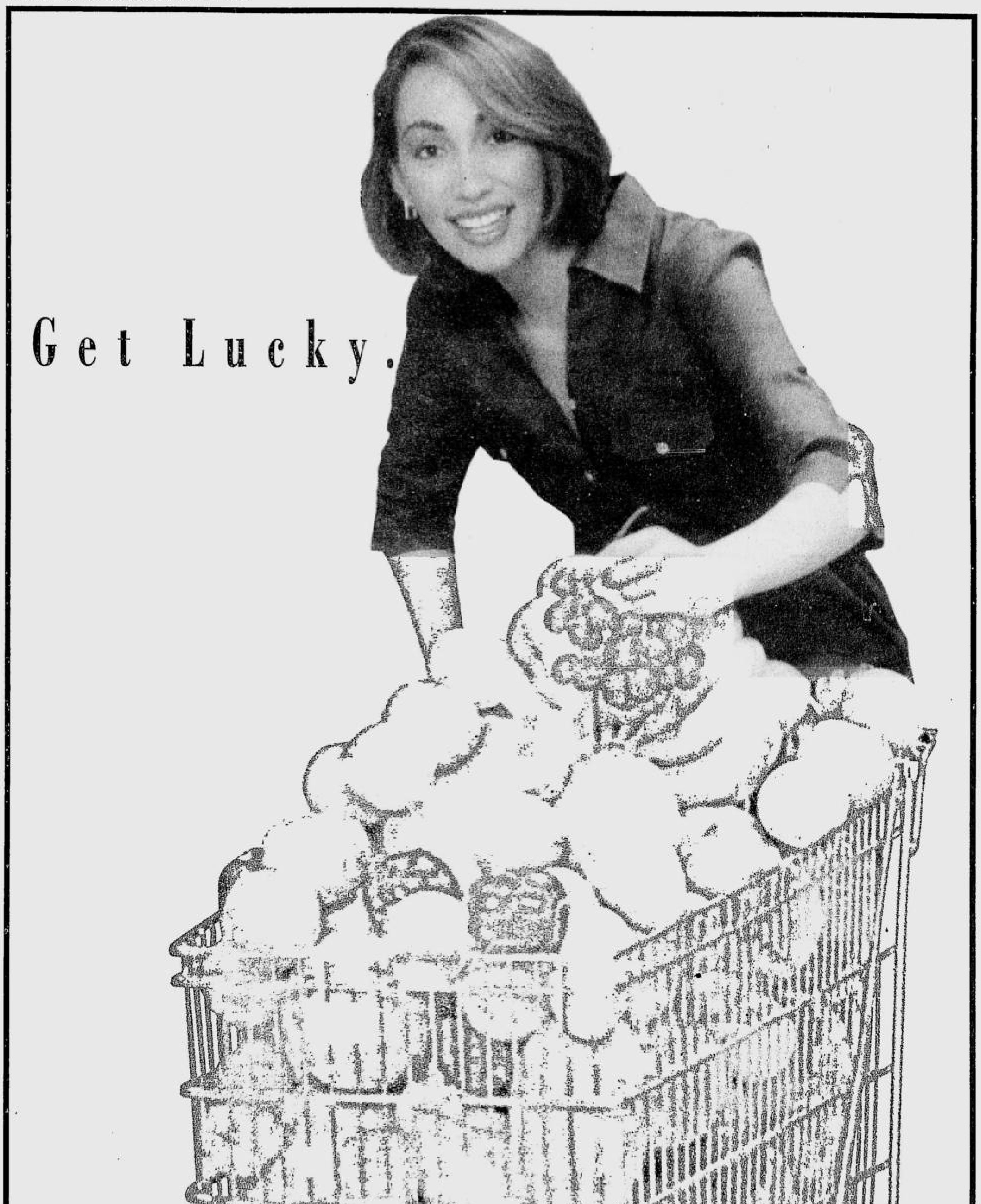

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OPINION

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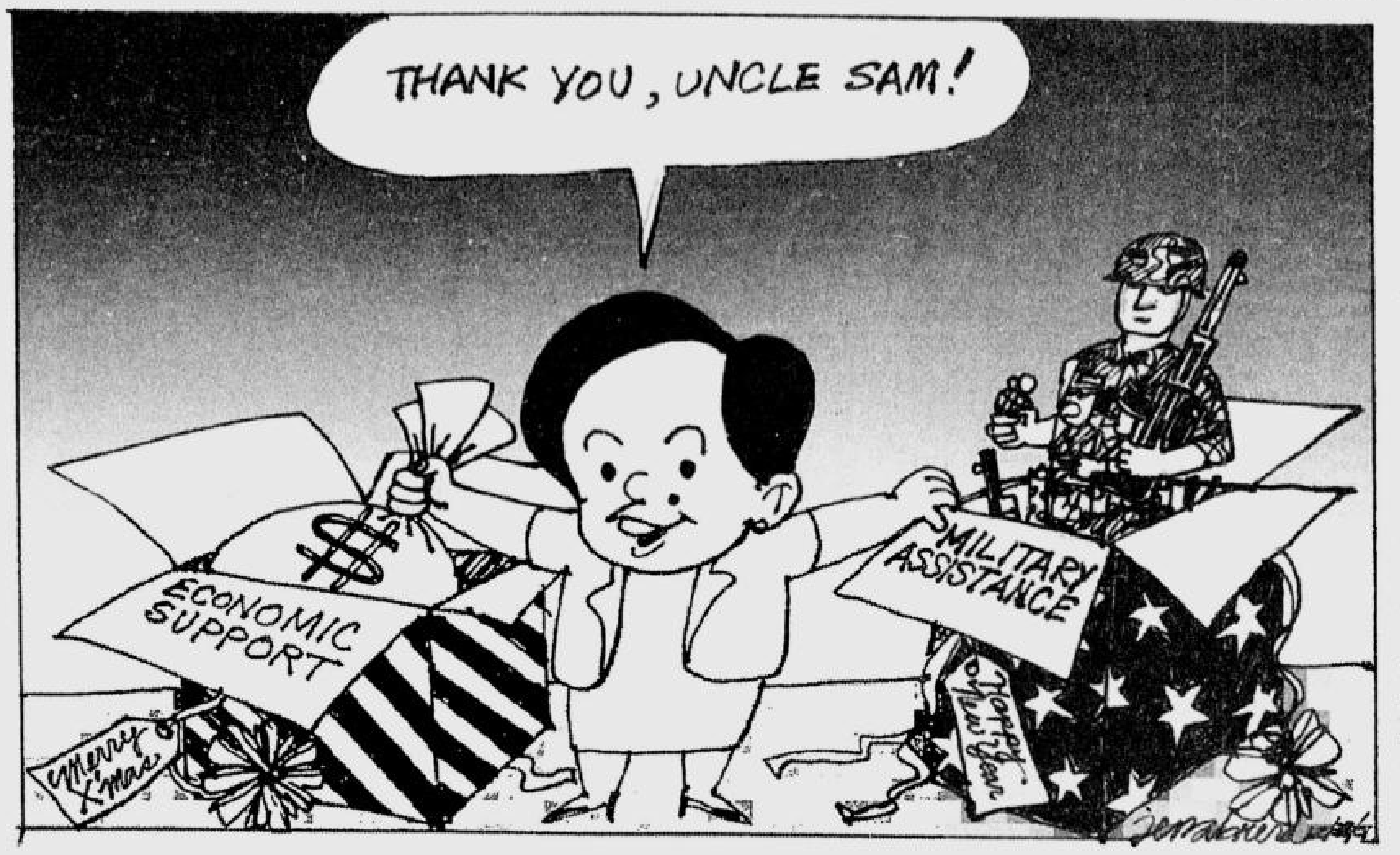

EDITORIALS

Whistling in the dark

PRESIDENT Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is bullish about the country's economic outlook. We are not going the way of Argentina, she said last week, after Argentine President Fernando de la Rua resigned in the wake of riots over the worst economic crisis to hit that country. Among the Asian countries, she said, we were the least affected by the recessive conditions that set upon the world in the last quarter of this year. And the worst is over for us. Next year, we expect to do even better, posting reasonably high rates of growth.

This is a theme she has repeated these past days.

It is all very good to refuse to be overwhelmed by bad times and to look at the future with a sense of hope. Much of economic progress is based on psychological factors, and confidence is foremost among them. When people are confident, things are bound to be better; they are bound to apply themselves to making things better.

But we do not know if the same thing cannot be achieved, or better, by "telling it like it is," or by giving people a sense of realism while appealing for their help. It is one thing for the people to be boundlessly optimistic, it is another for them to be hopelessly deluded.

The International Monetary Fund for one has already revised its economic forecast for the Philippines for next year, lowering it from its initial estimate of 3.5 percent of gross domestic product to 3.2. The revision is for all of Asia, which is expected to bear a great deal of the economic impact of the Sept. 11 attacks. "The key uncertainty in the outlook for much of Asia is the strength of export demand, especially the pace of recovery in technology sectors," the IMF said. Asia has been hardest hit after Sept. 11 by the sudden fall in demand for technology and electronic products, which it abundantly supplies.

The idea that we have been the least affected by the economic crisis that gripped the world during the last quarter of this year, even if true, is not altogether something to be cheerful about. We did hear the same thing from Malacañang several years ago after a financial crisis ravaged the Asian region. Then President Fidel V. Ramos also said that we were the last to go under and first to get out of the rubble among the Southeast Asian countries.

It was true, but only because we were the most backward among the Southeast Asian countries. We had so much less to lose. It's like saying a fierce storm has spared us more than a neighbor, when all we had was a *nipa* hut while our neighbor had an orchard. Naturally, we would lose less, because we had less. And naturally, we would be able to recover faster because *nipa* huts are easier to rebuild than orchards. Our differential effects and speeds of recovery do not emphasize our better ability to cope relative to other Southeast Asian countries, they emphasize our worse conditions relative to other Southeast Asian countries, particularly NICs Thailand and Malaysia.

Hope is good, but even better is looking at the world with 20-20 vision. If things are bound to get worse before they get better, which is what most economic soothsayers say (warnings about a worldwide recession were already being aired even before the Sept. 11 attacks), then the best thing to do is prepare. People who find themselves in the eye of a storm would not do well to go out of their *nipa* huts and start offering thanksgiving. They would do well to go out to fortify their wooden posts with everything they can find.

Singing in the sun

THERE is one other thing that President Macapagal can do to see us through the dark days ahead other than by telling it like it is. That is by making the poor the central object of any plan for survival or recovery.

Whether the President's own growth projections are true or not, none of it matters to people who are always the last to benefit from good times and the first to bear the brunt of bad times. Which is what the poor of this country have always experienced. When times are hard, they are the first to be sacrificed. When times are good, they are the last to get their due. It's a trickle-down effect where the neck of the bottle is clogged.

Growth is only as good as the bulk of the people, who are the poor of this country, gets to partake in it. The explosion of the poor early this year would have shown, if nothing has, that our problem is not poverty alone, it is inequality as well. That is the insult added to injury, the fact that while most people grovel in untold deprivation, some people revel in excessive endowment.

It's time the humble were exalted and the exalted humbled. That is no longer just a matter of faith, it is also a matter of survival.

A cruel Christmas gift for NLRC commissioner

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

"THE GARBAGE problem has been licked," President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo announced triumphantly several days ago.

I think it is not only Erap who has something wrong with his eyesight. President Macapagal's eyesight is also very bad. She can't see the piles of trash scattered all over Metro Manila. What does she think they are—gold? She must be living in another world.

She should turn her attention from her election campaign to the garbage problem. Why will the people elect her for another term when she can't even solve the trash problem? Why, she can't even appoint the right men as chair of the Metro Manila Development Authority and the interior secretary, the two officials who are supervising the collection and disposal of garbage. The two she appointed are better suited as PROs. MMDA Chair Benjamin Abalos, instead of disposing of garbage, issues press releases about what he plans to do but never gets around to doing them. Interior Secretary Joey Lina, instead of telling local government officials to collect their trash, frequently appears on television saying this and that. He mistakes that for doing his job. And President Macapagal issues statements that "the garbage problem has been solved."

Dear public officials: Please don't talk about it; just do it.

* * *

Mayor Pedro Cuerpo of Montalban (Rodriguez), Rizal, said only a court order can stop the opening of the dump in his municipality. Well, the courts should stop it. It has no Environment Compliance Certificate as the law requires. And it will pollute the drinking water of residents of Metro Manila, Montalban and San Mateo.

What's more, many areas around Metro Manila are being polluted by the secret dumps of the cities and municipalities of the metropolis.

When the MMDA abdicated the job of finding a dump for Metro's garbage, the local government units were left to their own devices. So in desperation, the mayors called the trash-collection contractors and told them: "Collect the garbage and dispose of them. *Bahala na kayo kung saan*. I don't want to know."

So the contractors have been bribing mayors, councilors and barangay captains of municipalities outside Metro Manila to allow them to dump their garbage there.

Where do they dump the trash? In secluded rivers, creeks, swamps, open fields. In short, they are polluting and killing the countryside. Someday all that garbage will come back to haunt us.

The President must be pretty naïve not to know that this is going on right under her nose. And with the connivance and encouragement of her very own subordinates.

* * *

Commissioner Vicente S.F. Veloso of the National Labor Relations Commission had a very cruel Christmas gift. Newspaper stories reported that he was "awarded early this year by DENR and DAR…land ownership certificates for 176 hectares of farmlands" in Barangay Tabangohay, Alang-Alang, Leyte. The reports added that 189 farmers "questioned the legality of the ownership papers given to Veloso since the DAR already issued certificates of land ownership to them in 1994" and that Veloso hired "goons to harass (the farmers) and force them out of their lands."

The whole story is false, Veloso said in a letter to this column. "I do not own a square meter, much less 176 hectares of land in Tabangohay, Alang-Alang, Leyte. I have not received any certificate of land ownership award (CLOA) from either or both DENR and DAR covering the said 176 hectares in Tabangohay. As a commissioner of the NLRC here in Manila, I cannot be a farmer-tiller in Tabangohay, Alang-Alang, Leyte. I am therefore disqualified to apply for any CLOA reserved by the CARP law for actual tiller-farmers."

He said that if anybody can locate the 176 hectares referred to in Tabangohay, he is willing to donate the land to the finder, "free of transfer taxes."

"I verified from DAR Leyte what the problem is all about," Veloso added, "and I was informed that the 1994 certificates of land ownership claimed by the 189 farmers are fake documents and that this was revealed to the farmer claimants by Leyte Paro Tiburcio Morales in their last meeting at the DAR provincial office in Tanglas, Tolosa, Leyte."

He enclosed an affidavit signed by the barangay chair of Tabangohay, Nenita de la Cruz Bacolod, who said that Veloso sought her out to find out what the published story about the 176 hectares of land was all about.

She said that Veloso or his family does not own any land in Tabangohay, and that as far as she knows, there was no problem between landowners and farmers in her barangay. There was therefore no reason for Veloso to harass any farmers.

Even the report that Veloso is harassing farmers in "Sitio Danao of Barangay Guinsiyaman" is a lie because there is no Sitio Danao in Guinsiyaman, San Miguel, Leyte, she said.

Why are they doing this to Veloso? Because he is on the short list of candidates who may be appointed to the Court of Appeals. The story was obviously planted to spoil his chances of being selected to the coveted position.

Still crazy after all these years

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I HEARD it a couple of times these past months.

The first time was in an out-of-town trip. I asked someone how a friend of mine, who became a priest and worked in a troubled spot, was doing. I hadn't seen him for some time, and seeing a common friend, I sought out news of him. The person I asked reflected a bit, and said: Well, he's doing okay now, but for some time, he was moody and abstract. He had just turned into his mid-50s, and one fine day, he started to wonder whether what he was doing was all worth it. Whether he was the best person to do what he was doing. Whether his talent and energies were not better spent doing something else. He was like this for some months, until just as suddenly, he snapped out of it. He's back to his normal self, funny and cheerful, carrying out his pastoral duties with renewed enthusiasm. Clearly, my informant said, he just had an attack of midlife crisis, the common scourge of people who turn into their mid-50s.

The other time was at a get-together, the kind animated by Bacchus' favorite libations. One person began talking about another friend whom I also hadn't seen for some time. He had just turned 50, and soon afterward stopped being easygoing and *mabarkada* and dropped out of sight. He became almost reclusive. On the occasions that people dropped by to see him, he still drank with them but soon lapsed into what-is-life-type talk, avoiding the usual loud and raucous banter. He wondered whether his life had been well spent, and what he really should be doing to deserve being put into this world. He wasn't a very religious man, but he kept wondering about human purpose, or his own at least. That lasted for several months, and then suddenly he snapped out of it. He's now back to being easygoing and *mabarkada* again. Clearly, the storyteller said, he just had an attack of midlife crisis, the more benign equivalent of temporary insanity.

These are fairly dramatic cases, if true. Most people I know who get to be 40 or 50 or 60, which is when the "affliction" is supposed to set in, do not fall in or out of this condition with the suddenness of Zen enlightenment. The changes are normally gradual and more subtle—in both directions, in the in and in the out. Some people I know never fall into it at all. But whether so or not, I've always been curious why people call the condition "midlife crisis."

To begin with, "midlife," as one humorist whose name I cannot now recall once put it, is really a misnomer. You can't be having a midlife, critical or not, at 50 onward unless you expect to live to be a hundred or more. Technically speaking, he said, midlife should really refer to the period from 35 to 40, or at best from 40-45. Fifties are not midlife, they are late in life. The point is not entirely lacking in insight, or portentous reminder, for all its amusing aspects.

But it's the word "crisis" that really arouses my curiosity. Because it's a trick mirror that raises intriguing questions about our own assumptions of what non-critical is. You point to what you think is abnormal, and you are also pointing to what you think is normal. You point to what you think is the exception, and you are also pointing to what you think is the rule.

If the abnormal, or aberrant, or critical, condition is one where we reflect on the direction of our lives, where we ponder human or individual purpose, where we ask, if jestingly or in the throes of libation, "What is life?" then the normal, regular, daily condition is one where we do **not**. That must say not very savory things about the quality of our normal lives, or our non-critical condition. There must be something horribly impoverished in it.

And it is, for most of us. Most of us spend our lives so crippled by work that we do not particularly care to do, driven to survive or own cars and houses and mistresses, not necessarily in that order of importance, or necessity, finding meaning or joy only within the narrow confines of those ends and the life-consuming struggle to attain them. Never stopping really to ponder the imponderable, as the phrase goes. These things are just a distraction from "real life." These things you do not stop to think about unless you are a philosopher or poet or someone who has nothing better to do than look back at the past.

No wonder it takes the shock of growing old and the prick of mortality to pluck us out of this rut. Which in any case for most people do not take on the aspect of a compelling need to reflect but merely a desperate stab at self-pity—at the terror of the loss of youthful attractiveness, or vigor, or virility. Which probably accounts as well for why people who suffer "midlife crisis" in this way are able to get over it in time. It simply becomes a question of coming to terms with diminished expectations, not a discovery to be treasured the rest of one's life, however little of it is left.

Maybe that is why writers, and philosophers and poets, seldom suffer from "midlife crisis," or the dementia we deem it to be. Or more to the point, maybe that is why they suffer from "midlife crisis"—or the bittersweet, tragicomic, sublimely angst-filled dementia we know it to be—all their lives. Even when they're young, even when they're old. They are the ones who constantly subject their lives to ruthless examination, pillaging it with the avariciousness of pirates, interrogating it with the implacability of the Inquisition. If that is a disease, isn't that one worth being afflicted with all our lives too? If that is a crisis, isn't that one worth being troubled with all our lives too? If that is an attack of insanity, isn't that one worth having again and again all our lives too?

Paul Simon said it best: Still crazy after all these years. I, for one, am glad I am.

* * *

Comments are welcome at dequiros@vasia.com

Trouble over assignment of teachers

COMMENTARY

Guadalupe L. Maisog

OUR lawmakers no doubt had the best intentions when they passed Republic Act 8190, "An Act Granting Priority to Residents of the Barangay, Municipality or City Where the School is Located, in the Appointment or Assignment of Classroom Public School Teachers." Soon after it was enacted, then Education Secretary Ricardo T. Gloria issued DECS Order No. 11, S. 1997 promulgating the rules and regulations implementing RA 8190.

One of the salient features of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports order says that vacant positions in public elementary or secondary schools shall be filled up by the appointment or assignment of teachers who meet the minimum qualifications (education, experience, training and civil service eligibility) for the position with the preference to be given to bona fide residents in the following order of priority:

(a) First priority shall be given to residents of the barangay where the public elementary or secondary school is located.

(b) Second priority shall be given to residents of the municipality where the public elementary or secondary school is located.

(c) Third priority shall be given to residents of the municipality or the city or province where the public elementary or secondary school is located.

Before this law was passed, public school teachers were hired on the basis of a division-wide ranking. If there were 20 vacant positions in the division, the first 20 in the ranking were hired. The newly hired teachers were not immediately assigned to their place of residence because the vacancies in the poblacion or school located along the road would be filled up with transferees assigned in far-flung barangays or towns. There was very little trouble because it seemed only fair that teachers assigned many kilometers away from their homes who were already in the service for some time were given the first priority to work in their own barangay or in a nearby barangay or town.

Under the present set-up, teachers who have been working for five or more years but who live in a barangay that has no school have practically no hope of being assigned to teach near their place of residence. On the other hand, a newly hired teacher living in a barangay that has a school will be assigned to that school even if he is at the tail-end of the ranking. In this particular situation, ranking becomes a useless exercise.

Since only six months of residence is required for a teacher to get the assignment, some unscrupulous applicants establish residence by living with relatives or friends in the barangay where a vacancy is anticipated. All he has to do is get a certification from the barangay captain or from the head teacher of the school that he has resided in the barangay for six months.

Perhaps the lawmakers who crafted the legislation heard complaints from some teachers who had been assigned to barangays and towns that were far from their residence. In an attempt to address this problem, Congress passed the law localizing the assignment of teachers. But instead of solving the problem, it has often compounded it. Many school administrators spend more time hearing complaints than attending to their administrative and supervisory functions. Some supervisory functions which are crucial to the improvement of teacher efficiency and pupil performance are sacrificed because problems pertaining to the assignment of teachers have to be threshed out. It seems that RA 8190 has created more problems than solutions.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has also announced that her administration would build a school in every barangay. That should be music to the ears of people living in barangays where there are no schools, but there are cases when the program is impractical. For instance, some barangays are located only one kilometer apart, so building two schools would be a waste of resources. Then there are barangays that are sparsely populated, and here again, building a school would lead to waste.

As a district supervisor in Bohol, I once had to close down a school upon the advice of the division superintendent. Periodic reports had shown that for three consecutive years, the school had no more than 14 students enrolled in every level from Grades 1 to 4. Because of this, only one teacher was assigned to the school, and more often than not, he would only teach a single lesson for all levels and some subjects were not being taught for the whole year.

Not surprisingly, the academic performance of multi-grade classes is far below par.

Controversies in the assignment of teachers under RA 8190 are bound to continue. Many teachers feel frustrated, discouraged and unjustly deprived of the opportunity to teach near their residence. They are lucky if there are no applicants in the school near their homes when a vacancy occurs. The feeling of frustration can easily manifest itself in laziness, tardiness and absenteeism. All this of course will not improve the quality of their teaching. Teachers readily use the distance of the school from their residence as an excuse for their tardiness or absenteeism.

Frustration breeds discontent. Discontent can lead teachers to commit fraud especially in filling up their daily time record. Some teachers even have the temerity to report that they went to work on days when they were actually absent. Oftentimes this creates animosity between teacher and superior or even among teachers in the same school.

Certainly, RA 9180 has solved some problems but in the process of its implementation, more problems have cropped up. Could it be because no consultations were held with DECS personnel in the field before the bill was passed?

Perhaps Education Secretary Raul Roco should order a study on the effects of this law so that amendments can be introduced to improve it.

Guadalupe L. Maisog is a retired education supervisor.

The young mother

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

YESTERDAY, I reprinted on this space the first part of the story of Josefa, a young teaching assistant to an American teacher known to us only as Mrs. Meade. Their story is told in an account titled "The Philippine Experiences of an American Teacher" by William C. Freer, a "Thomasite," as the American teachers brought over by the government to teach in their new colony were known, who was assigned to Bicol. Freer's account is reprinted in the volume, "Bearers of Benevolence: The Thomasites and Public Education in the Philippines," published recently to commemorate the centenary of the arrival of the Thomasites. The book is edited by Mary Racelis and Judy Celine Ick.

By way of introducing Mrs. Meade's story about Josefa, Freer notes: "One of the most pleasing features of the schoolwork in the Camarines is the faithfulness of the Filipino teachers." While admiring of the locals' industry and loyalty, Freer is apt to treat them as a parent would a child. (Then again, this was written at the birth of a new colonial order, remember?) "Complete confidence once established between the American and the Filipino teacher, the devotion and loyalty of the latter is a child-like faith which is blind to all other interests, even to personal feeling," writes Freer, who offers the story told to him by Mrs. Meade to illustrate his point.

* * *

AT THIS point in Josefa's story, we already know that she is a well-regarded teaching assistant, devoted to her duties and, though a plodding student, was nonetheless hardworking and diligent.

Josefa's pride and joy is her baby boy, the young Hilario, healthy and bright-eyed, whom she would show off to the American teacher every time Mrs. Meade happened to pass by their home. It became a sort of ritual for them: Josefa holding up Hilario to show him off, and Mrs. Meade paying requisite praise to the boy's healthy looks and Josefa's excellent care.

But Mrs. Meade believes Josefa deserves more responsibility, respect and reward. She urges the young mother to study for and take the exam for the post of insular teacher, which would not only increase her pay four times, but also earn her the respect of the community. Not wanting to let down her friend and superior, Josefa rises to the challenge. This is her story.

* * *

FINALLY the examination day arrived, and with great satisfaction I saw (Josefa) pass on her way to the superintendent's office. She appeared thoughtful and preoccupied; evidently she felt that much was expected of her and she would be grieved if she failed. Upon going to the office I noticed that Josefa was intent upon her papers and that her checks were flushed, a rare occurrence with members of her race; I attributed it to the excitement attendant upon the occasion. She did not look up from her work and of course I could not speak to her. I felt pleased that I had succeeded in keeping her up to the point of undertaking the examination. I did not see her at noon; she was back in her place in the afternoon, still sober and thoughtful and even more flushed than in the morning. I congratulated myself that her hard work was almost finished; I knew she would succeed.

That evening, just before dark, as I passed by their home, I stopped under the window and called her. She came to the window sobbing. "Why, my dear girl," I said, "what is the matter? I know you have done well. You will surely get good marks. Don't cry, Josefa. Let me see your baby, do."

"Oh, Mrs. Meade," she exclaimed, "my little Hilario died this afternoon."

"Why, Josefa, my child!"

"Yes," she continued, sobbing after I had gone up into the house, "yes, he took sick yesterday. Oh, his skin was very hot. All night he tossed in the hammock. My husband and I sat up with him. We fanned him. This morning he was a little better; he took a few sips of milk; I knew he was very sick. But I went to the examination. When I came home he was worse; the *calentura* was burning up my baby; he lay in the hammock and gasped for breath; the day was too hot. But I had to take the examination; I had to go back; I knew my baby was going to die; but I had to go. My husband went to the *almacen* and got permission; he was here; he took care of him; but I had to go—it was my duty. And while I was writing, I knew that my baby was dead; and when I came home, I found it was so: my little Hilario was gone."

I embraced the girl and we wept together. "Oh, why did you go when your baby was sick? Why didn't you tell me of this, Josefa?"

"Because I could not take time to go to you. I had to hurry back to my child. I wanted to stay with my baby, but the examination is so important; I had to go; I had to leave him. Oh, my child, my baby!" And she went over to the bed and knelt and sobbed by the little white corpse.

I did what I could to comfort them. But oh, how can I ever cease reproaching myself for having placed so much stress on the taking of the examination by that mother?

* * *

WHAT mother hasn't felt the push-and-pull between responsibilities outside the home and duty at home? What "working mom" has not felt the ambivalence, magnified many times over in Josefa's case, inherent in the choice between work and self-advancement and family duties and emotional ties?

In this, Josefa's story resonates with universal truth, while rich in the particulars, too, of a time when Filipinos, to quote Ick in the book's conclusion, were engaged in the "dynamics of colonial cultural production...the forging of a new culture."

Food makes us what we are

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

WHEN I saw President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on television greeting *balikbayans* and overseas Filipinos workers at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, I noted two things:

First, how sedate the crowd was compared to the time when Erap did the same gimmick. OFWs swarmed all over Erap, while the reaction to GMA was lackluster. Even the lucky person who was welcomed with a check for P100,000 was not as enthusiastic as those who had a photo-op with Erap.

Second, the OFWs and *balikbayans* in their *maong* jackets, carrying their overweight cabin luggage with *pasalubongs*, made me recall the letters of Marcelo H. del Pilar to his wife "Tsanay." These letters, written in Spain from 1889 to 1895 and sent to Bulacan, express the same sentiments that today are relayed by snail mail, voice tapes, e-mail and text. The homesickness of Del Pilar remains the same today. In June 1889 he wrote:

"On the 24th of this month I watched the procession for the Corpus in Barcelona from the home of Ramon Imperial who hails from Camarines...I had dinner there with Naning, Damaso, Tiago and others. We had *sinigang na alumahan* and rice, and it made us feel good. If you have *sinigang* every day in the Philippines you don't mind it, but only when you are abroad do you realize how good it is. For expatriates, one of their dreams is to have a taste of *sinigang*."

Sometimes I wonder if the Philippines is really in our hearts rather than in our palates and stomachs. When one is abroad he longs for rice, *adobo* and *sinigang*. We do not feel the same way for the national anthem or the "Panatang Makabayan." We do not even pine for national symbols like the sampaguita, carabao, or Jose Rizal.

Unlike expatriates of the late 19th century who had to concoct a *sinigang* with lemons and tomatoes, we have instant *sinigang* mixes today, the best of which is the Mama Sita brand made from real *sampaloc*. I am not a dinosaur but when abroad, I was forced to make my own *tapa*, *tocino*, *leche flan* and even complicated dishes like *dinuguan* from mashed blood sausages. You do not realize how wonderful Filipino food is until you live in a land whose staple happens to be bread and potatoes.

Aside from *adobo* and *sinigang*, Filipinos associate certain tastes with childhood memories. In Chicago last year, my Filipino landlord sent me *pan de limon*, edam cheese and honey-cured ham that made me realize Christmas was fast approaching. The tastes of Christmases past came flooding in as I ate these alone in my apartment and tears began to fall from my eyes. So this is what OFWs and heroes like Rizal, Luna, Del Pilar and the others felt to be abroad at this time of year, I told myself.

The next day, I thanked my landlord for giving me a taste of the Philippines even if I was in the United States. After we talked of childhood meals, I received a grocery bag filled with Spam, corned beef and Vienna sausages whose tastes were also part of my childhood. I never paid attention to these at home, but at that point they became my connection with family and friends back in the Philippines.

Reading the letters of Del Pilar made me think of my own Christmases abroad. I also started to wonder who were the people mentioned. Of course, Naning was Mariano Ponce, but who were Damaso and Tiago who might have been the inspiration for the characters of the same name in Rizal's "Noli Me Tangere"?

In December 1890, Del Pilar was explaining to his wife how cold it was in Spain. He said that in Bulacan when the thermometer hit 17 degrees it was considered cold, but where he was it was 9 degrees below zero. Now that is really cold and he kept warm by thinking of his children back home. He wrote:

"Its Christmas and I can imagine the happiness over there...Last night Rizal and [the other expatriates] had *noche buena* here and the table we used to eat our food from was our left palm while we used the right hand to put food in our mouth. We had rice, duck, *lechon* with a sauce which was *parang salsa rian* [like a sauce there] because the cook was Filipino, We parted ways at 5 a.m. and I'm very tired."

Obviously, Del Pilar went home with a hangover, but the fascinating detail for me was how they ate *kamayan* on their left hand. I have tried eating with my hands on a paper plate or banana leaf but never from my own hand. Perhaps they were in a cramped apartment.

This is but a tidbit from notebooks filled with references to food: what Rizal and Aguinaldo ate for breakfast, Del Pilar warning his family against eating commercial *pancit* and *lumpia* during a cholera epidemic, etc. Even Mabini whose dry impersonal correspondence yields his dislike of canned food and also a memorandum to the president dated Feb. 22, 1899:

"...I would like you to know also that yesterday I received a bill of lading for you, certifying that the *jefe* in Dagupan had sent here a quantity of *poto-seco*. I forwarded the bill to the military administrator, but he has not sent word whether he has gotten the *poto-seco* from the train."

This was but two weeks from the outbreak of the Filipino-American War, and you have Mabini writing the president about *poto-seco*? Reading the references to food in our history makes us realize how much food not only sustains us, but makes us what we are.

* * *

Comments are welcome at ambeth@admu.edu.ph

Giuliani took the rot out of the Big Apple

FEATURE

Grant McCool

NEW YORK—In eight years as mayor, Rudolph Giuliani took the rot out of the Big Apple.

To admirers and some detractors, Giuliani made New York safer by cracking down on crime and stamped a larger-than-life personality on the most diverse city in the world, a city many considered ungovernable. However critics of his eight-year administration which ends on Jan. 1 saw a snarling, intemperate leader who trampled on civil liberties, set out to destroy dissenters and harmed race relations by appearing at times to ignore the city's growing black and Hispanic population.

But everyone agrees that the energetic, forceful Giuliani led the city of eight million people with a inspiring blend of compassion, calm and toughness through its worst crisis: the Sept. 11 hijacked plane attacks that destroyed the World Trade Center, killed thousands and damaged the economy.

"I think he will be remembered for three things: Sept. 11 and the aftermath, the tremendous decline in crime and thirdly, for bringing back to the city a sense of unity. Giuliani, who is known to everyone as "Rudy," almost never took a vacation and rushed around the city attending to business, visiting disaster scenes at all times of day and night, consistently sending the message that he was in control.

More than once, Giuliani would say, "I give this city everything I've got." No one doubted it.

Images of Giuliani covered in ash and dirt as he led the emergency response alongside his police and fire department chiefs immediately after the twin towers' collapse symbolized his hands-on style of governing.

Already nationally and internationally acclaimed for his crime-fighting exploits since he was first elected in 1993, after Sept. 11 Giuliani became "America's mayor" and burnished his legacy as one of the most important occupants of city hall in New York's 335-year history of electing mayors. Time magazine named Giuliani its "Person of the Year" for his post-Sept. 11 leadership.

Complicated legacy

Giuliani leaves a complicated legacy from a mayoralty that was eventful both politically and personally even before two hijacked planes slammed into the 110-story twin towers, altering the city's skyline and psyche forever.

Crime rates fell to the lowest level in 30 years, making not only residents feel safer, but boosting tourism and the economy with more firms willing to do business in New York.

Giuliani redirected the country's largest police force of about 40,000 officers to rout criminals and rid the streets of some of the city's toughest and poorest neighborhoods of drugs and guns. While crime started declining under Giuliani's predecessor David Dinkins, the overall rate fell 52 percent from 1994 through 2001. Murders were reduced by 68 percent.

The transformation of Times Square, the so-called "Crossroads of the World," to an area of family theaters and new corporate headquarters from one dominated by sex shops and hustlers, would not have been possible without crime reductions, observers said.

Giuliani said in one of his final public appearances as mayor that he believed crime reduction was not the achievement he was proudest of during his eight years in office, although without that, many changes could not have taken place. "It's the change in the spirit of the city," Giuliani said. "When I came into office, the city didn't believe in itself. In 1990 we were on the cover of Time magazine, and it had 'The Rotting Apple.' And my mission...was to make people believe in the City of New York again."

'Two New Yorks'

But according to some black and Hispanic leaders, the crime and "quality of life" campaigns came at a cost of making many residents feel targets rather than the benefactors of those policies.

Bronx Borough president Fernando Ferrer, bidding to become the first Puerto Rican mayor of New York, campaigned this year partly on the theme that Giuliani's legacy was one of "two New Yorks" and vowed to represent those left behind. Ferrer lost to public advocate Mark Green in a Democratic primary run-off and Green lost the mayoral election to Republican media mogul Michael Bloomberg, who succeeds Giuliani on Jan. 1.

"He is a tough guy who insists on getting his way. He can be fantastically obnoxious about it," Baruch College political science professor David Birdsell said of Giuliani. He added that by the time of the 2001 mayoral campaign to elect his successor, New Yorkers were ready for a change in style. "I think everybody was real happy to have Rudy the turf-pawing, steam-snorting champing bully for these eight years and everybody was happy to see it go. And that's what they were looking for in a new leader," Birdsell said.

The spring of 2000 was one of the most dramatic periods in Giuliani's life. In March, an undercover police officer shot and killed an unarmed black man in a scuffle outside a night club, the latest in a handful of controversial shootings by police that had human rights groups scrutinizing police practices. In April, Giuliani disclosed he had prostate cancer, putting his putative US Senate campaign against First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton in disarray. Then in May, he announced a Manhattan woman, Judith Nathan, was "a very good friend" and said he was separating from his wife of 16 years, TV presenter/actress Donna Hanover.

"He ended up this operatic character who people feel passionately about one side or another," said Gene Russianhoff, a self-described professional critic of city government who heads the Public Interest Research Group.

Giuliani was successfully treated for prostate cancer, a disease he said produced the "most fundamental change" in him as a person. "That was the first time that required me to say, 'I am going to die. Not necessarily of cancer, but I am gonna die.' So you realize you'd better do something with your life that makes you happy with yourself. I decided politics was not my entire life," he said in an interview with The New York Times.

Russianhoff acknowledged that New York, which once had a reputation around the world as a dirty, crime-ridden, ungovernable and sprawling metropolis, was "obviously a safer city and in many ways a better-managed city than it was." But he added that Giuliani's undiplomatic style and penchant for humiliating those who disagreed with him, had a polarizing effect. "I think he could have achieved many of the things he achieved without as much bombast and with more respect...He was certainly needlessly derisive and dismissive of other officials and groups," Russianhoff said.

Yet politeness itself became a policy under Giuliani. In February 1998, the mayor called on traditionally gritty and edgy New Yorkers to be more polite as part of one of his famous "quality of life" initiatives that over the years, targeted everyone from jaywalkers and hotdog vendors to drug dealers and mass murderers.

Reuters

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Who will profit most from Malampaya?

"DOE readies rules for gas industry," the INQUIRER reported last Nov. 27. "Gov't promotes commercial use of natural gas," another INQUIRER headline said on Dec. 7.

So after the inauguration of the Malampaya project, the Department of Energy is now drafting the rules for the development of other uses for Malampaya's natural gas, and promoting the use of natural gas as fuel for vehicles.

The reaction is quite delayed but welcome nonetheless. All this should have been done years ago so that now when natural gas is available, everything would have already been in second gear. Imagine, the rules or procedures will be available only in March 2002, while vehicles will start running on natural gas only in 2004. And yet the Malampaya project was started during the time of President Corazon Aquino.

As a matter of fact, "rules" are not very difficult to formulate, and vehicles can easily be converted to use gas. The latter has been done in many other countries since 40 years ago. Buses, taxis and jeepneys can even alternately run on gas and gasoline. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo should not have talked as if the use of natural gas in motor vehicles were a recent discovery.

Now German and Japanese firms are said to be offering "technical assistance" for the promotion of vehicles that run on CNG, or LPG, or are they simply selling buses? It's like, we already have the gas, so all we need are the buses. Incidentally, where did the DOE get that gas-fed bus that the President Macapagal rode on?

Natural gas comes from marine mammals and plants that perished millions of years ago. It has a very high heating value. It contains gaseous hydrocarbons and combustible gases like methane, propane, ethane and butane. They are sources of hydrogen, alcohol, acetylene, refrigerants and other chemicals.

Butane and propane are the chief components of LPG, or cooking gas, which is also commonly used as fuel for vehicles in Japan, Canada and many other countries as well as cheap and environment-friendly. Instead of planning for the use of CNG or LPG as fuel in the Calabarzon area only in year 2004, I suggest that this be used in Metro Manila as soon as possible. It will cut down pollution in the metropolis, and it is also very cheap. A little refining and liquefying of the gas, a little conversion on the vehicle and an additional LPG cylinder tank are all that is needed.

But Malampaya will not be of great help to Filipinos if its development does not reduce the costs of electricity, vehicle fuel and cooking gas dramatically. Do you know that despite the many so-called price rollbacks of the oil companies, LPG still costs the same?

There are other questions that require answers. For instance, if the consortium that developed Malampaya risked $4.8 billion on pipes and rigs and promises to pay between $8 and $ 10 billion in royalty to the government, how much is Malampaya worth then? What's in it for them? Will that royalty be our rightful share? Why are they talking of royalty and not a share of the proceeds? How much is 2.7 trillion cubic feet of natural gas worth? (Malampaya's natural gas can fill a big box measuring 10 kilometers long, 10 km wide and 1 km deep.) And there could be more wells beneath us. Besides, Malampaya also has 40 million barrels of oil reserves that should be worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

How much can we save in terms of crude oil imports which annually amounts to $3 billion, when we start using natural gas? Also, how much revenue will Malampaya generate for the government? In other words, will Malampaya make money for the Philippine government or the foreign consortium?

Let's not forget that the consortium, the majority of whom are oil companies already operating in this country, are salesmen for their mother companies or some suppliers of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. They make as much profit for their head office as they can. With Malampaya, imports and therefore their profits would be reduced, unless they can also make money out of Malampaya. There seems to be a conflict of interest here, but they are even capitalizing the development of Malampaya.

We've been complaining too much about our economic woes. Malampaya could be the answer, but we still don't know it. It was not even considered as a minor solution during the economic summit. It promises billions in revenue, but not a word was heard from the DOE at the summit.—**ALBERTO F. DEL PILAR, 1 Apo St., Suburban Heights, Cainta Rizal**

LETTERS

Dirty tap water in SSS Village

WE notice that our water supply here in SSS Village, Marikina, is frequently dirty. The stench is such that we can smell it the minute we open our taps.

This has been going on for more than a month now. We request Manila Water to look into this immediately before an epidemic breaks out in our community.

Then, too, our water supply has become irregular. There are times when our faucets are dry.

One of our neighbors personally reported these problems to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (Marikina branch) as early as three weeks ago, and he has since then made many follow-ups, but the situation remains the same.

Will somebody please act on our request soonest?—**HANNAH LILIAN M. VICENTE, 46 Sunburst St., SSS Village, Marikina City**

GENUINE RICE SELF-SUFFICIENCY, NOT IMPORTATION!

(STATEMENT OF VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS STRONGLY OPPOSING THE LIFTING OF NFA'S POWER TO IMPORT RICE; REPLACEMENT OF Q.R WITH TARIFFICATION; AND H.B. 3339.)

IT APPEARS the government is bent on abdicating on its responsibility of providing for the food security of the Filipino people. For instead of strengthening the country's capabilities to produce rice competitively, the government itself is leading efforts that could lead to the total disabling of the rice industry, which could result in perennial shortages and total dependence on imports. These include:

- **the proposal to absurdly convert the farmers into importers of the commodities they themselves produce;**
- **the proposal to replace quantitative restrictions on rice imports with tariffs, even way ahead of the schedules set by the World Trade Organization (WTO); and**
- **House Bill No. 3339, which seeks to put into law such proposals.**

In an attempt to gather consensus on these proposals, the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the National Food Authority (NFA) recently conducted several supposed consultations with various sectors, particularly with the farmers' groups, in various parts of the country. In these consultations the farmers, consumers, civil society and even the business sector flatly rejected the proposals. The farmers were particularly peeved at the idea of encouraging them to instead import rather than plant rice. They likened the idea, which has been traced from a pseudo farmer leader who has the ears of the President, to egging them to commit mass suicide.

True to earlier suspicions, the supposed consultations were nothing but a a farce. This became apparent during the national consultations held December 5, 2001 at the Department of Agriculture, when officials of the NFA presented a document outlining the mechanics for the proposals that were rejected in the earlier regional consultations. In other words, the government simply panned and ignored the results of the so-called consultations and attempted to ram down and railroad the implementation of the proposals. As expected, those who attended the December 5 national consultation were even more unanimous in their opposition to the proposals, and Party List Representative Ben Cruz, one of the main proponents of HB 3339, was jeered by the farmers whom he claim to represent in Congress when he tried to belabor on his "dream" to make the farmers entrepreneurs.

In Cruz' own turf in Bulacan, 23 farmers' organizations and cooperatives have issued resolutions and statements condemning the initiative of the congressman.

Despite the clear and strong opposition of the various stakeholders of the rice industry, the NFA afterwards went on to announce through the media its intentions of immediately implementing the rejected proposals. The NFA went further in announcing that it is already liquidating its own organization by disposing its assets, indicating that government is indeed abdicating on state responsibilities to national food security, allowing the predatory market forces, particularly the importers to take over.

Quite clearly, government has already made up its mind when it called for the so-called consultations. For one, the filing of HB 3339 by Speaker Jose de Venecia and Cruz was in response to a requisite by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the release of the $175 million balance of the Grains Sector Development Program (GSDP). The bill seeks to strip the NFA of its sole power to import rice, transferring such power to the farmers; and replacing the quantitative restrictions on rice imports with tariff, effective July 2002, or two years ahead of the WTO schedule. The ADB had earlier released $100 million from the loan, and how it has been spent has never been made known. The bank has withheld the release of the balance unless its conditionalities are met, which is what HB 3339 intends to dutifully comply with.

The fact is, professional hacks masquerading as consultants to the ADB, as well as agriculture officials of the US Embassy, were highly visible during the DA-NFA consultations, making sure the results were as they wanted. Some of these highly-paid "guns-for-hire" of the consulting business used to be former DA officials who have been pushing farmers to abandon rice farming in favor of cutflowers and the so-called high value crops, and who introduced "golden kuhol" to the farmers, which is actually a pest that needs to be eradicated with highly toxic chemicals manufactured by multinationals.

THE REAL intention is to privatize rice importation. The business involving the Filipino staple food, a commodity that we cannot do without, is simply mindboggling. The real intention is to put the Philippine rice market under an import regime dominated by big business.

The idea of giving the farmers the opportunity to import rice is but a bizarre sweetener to such intention. Farmers importing the product they produce is the height of absurdity. It means the farmers will be competing with themselves, if at all they have the capability and enormous capital to import billions worth of rice. The proponents to this know this can never be a reality, not in Ben Cruz' wildest dreams, unless some moneyed groups underwrite the enterprise using the farmers as their fronts. Meaning, the business of handling rice, the nation's most precious commodity, will be in the hands of shady businessmen whose only interest is profit.

> ***Farmers importing the product they produce is the height of absurdity. It means the farmers will be competing with themselves...***

To advance the interest of the farmers is to enable them to produce more and allow them control over the fruits of their labor.

Meantime, the argument used by the ADB consultants that tariffs on imported rice will protect farmers and reduce graft and corruption in the NFA is non-sequitur. On the contrary, the imposition of high tariffs could cause the worsening of rice smuggling, and would surely result in higher consumer prices. The issue of graft and corruption in rice importation by the NFA and other government officials should be addressed and confronted squarely.

GENUINE SELF-SUFFICIENCY in rice through genuine agrarian reform, not importation, is the only way to ensure the food security of the country. Problems with regards to the competitiveness of local production vis-à-vis countries like Vietnam, Thailand and China could be resolved through the promotion and adoption better efficiency in production and postharvest processes, modern but sustainable technology and rationalization of the rice marketing channels. The country need not aspire to export rice, thus there should be problem even if Vietnam's rice is cheaper. The important thing is that we are able to produce rice sufficient enough to meet our needs whatever the conditions of the world market, and that our farmers are sufficiently rewarded for their efforts.

Self-sufficiency in our staple food is our country's only defense against the onslaught of globalization.

We call on the President to take heed of this position of the farmers, consumers, civil society and other key stakeholders of the rice and agriculture industry which agriculture officials have ignored in the farcical consultations. We warn of the dire and irreversible consequences should we surrender our national food security to the forces of speculation, profit and greed.

Groups and organizations which have expressed opposition through resolutions and statements to the proposals to privatize rice importations, replace quantitative restrictions of rice imports with tariffs, and the HB 3339:

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION NATIONAL BOARD (NFAEA NB) • CONFEDERATION FOR UNITY, RECOGNITION AND ADVANCEMENT OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES (COURAGE) • KILUSANG MAGBUBUKID NG PILIPINAS (KMP) • REGIONAL FARMERS ACTION COUNCIL (RFAC- I, II, III, IV, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, NCR, ARMM) • NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF IRRIGATORS ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILS. (NCIA) • PROVINCIAL FARMERS ACTION COUNTIL (PFAC) • AMA • PAMBANSANG KATIPUNAN NG MGA SAMAHAN SA KANAYUNAN (PKSK) • AMMMA • KABAPA-PFAB • KAISAHAN NG MANGGAGAWA SA KANAYUNAN • PASCRES • PHIL DHRRA/AR NOW! • FAITH • PHILCONGRAINS • AMMANI • ANIBAN NG MGA MAGSASAKA AT MANGGAGAWA SANIUGAN – PHIL. (AMMN) • FAITH VKVETS • PHCCI-DGTE CITY • PFAC ILOCOS NORTE/WESTERN PANGASINAN/EASTERN PANGASINAN/ABRA/ILOCOS NORTE/ ILOCOS SUR • ABRA RIVER IRRIGATORS ASSN • ABRA – PFAC • ABRA GRECON • TANAWAN DAIRY MPCI • SN. PABLO MPCI BULACAN • ST. JOSEPH MPCI • SAMAHAN NG MAGSASAKA – CALAWITAN • GOLDEN GRAINS MPCI • UGNAYANG MAGBUBUKID SA MALAMIG • MAGMARALO MPCI • PINAOD CENTRAL MPCI • GREATER BULACAN LIVELIHOOD DEVT. CORP. • BALAONG MPCI • AGRI-BUSINESS DEVT. COOPERATIVE INC. • UGMAYANG MAGBUBUKID NG MGA MAGSASAKA • SAN PABLO MPCI • SN. ILDEFONSO BAGONG PAG-ASA MPCI • UMASA KA MPCI • ALYANSA NG MGA MAGBUBUKID SA BULACAN • VERDE AVENUE MPCI • ALYANSA NG MGA MAGBUBUKID SA BULACAN • PROVINCIAL FARMERS' ACTION COUNCIL (PFAC-BULACAN) • MAGKAKAISANG MGA MAGSASAKA NG STA. RITA • KAPATIRAN TAKUSA MPCI • CAPANGPANGAN MPCI • FLORIDABLANCA FED OF MPCI • LIGHT OF HOPE MPCI • NORMEX PRODUCERS COOP INC. • SN MPCI • SAN JOSE MALINO I.A. • PULANGMASLE MPCI • PALINLANG MPCI • GUREN-SUPA MPCI • CRUZIAN MPCI • STO NIÑO BARANGGCA MPCI • VIZAL SAN PABLO I.A. • POTRETO MPCI • ANSO MPCI • PULANG GUBAT • WEFANAO WORKERS MPCI • 46 FARMERS AND CONSUMERS COOPS FROM TARLAC • GRAINS RETAILERS ASSOCIATION NE. SAN LEONARDO • CABANATUAN CITY • RIZAL • LAUR • QUEZON • PALAYAN CITY • STA. ROSA • ZARAGOSA • GEN. NATIVIDAD PFAC – BATAAN • NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL & FISHERIES ACTION COUNCIL, AURORA • MANGGITAHAN MPCI, AURORA • EZPERANZA MPCI, AURORA • BANAOG MPCI, AURORA PFAC, OCC. MIN • PFAC SORSOGON • MASBATE • COOPERATIBA NG MGA SAMAHANG KABUHAYAN NG ZARRAGA, INK., ILOILO • GRECON ILOILO • CAMARINES NORTE • VINZONS CN • SANDIONICIO MPCI • ARBA ILOILO • PFAC SIQUIJOR • SIMAYA PRIMARY MPCI, SIMAYA CITY • KONSUMO DABAW • DALJAO RETAILERS OF GRAINS ASSOCIATION • CALINAN MPCI • PEOPLE OF THE TAWI-TAWI • AMMMANI • PAMBANSANG LAKAS NG KILUSANG PAMAMALAKAYA NG PILIPINAS (PAMALAKAYA) • KADAMAY • ANAK BAYAN • DEAPARTMENT OF LABOR EMPLOYMENT EMPLOYEES UNION (DOLE-EA) • (LEAP-LWUA) • NATIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY CONSOLIDATED UNION OF EMPLOYEES (NFA-CUE) • NATIONAL IRRIGATION ADMINISTRATION EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES (NIA-EASP) • ALLIANCE OF CONCERNED EMPLOYEES OF THE PHIL. FISHERIES DEV'T. AUTHORITY (ACE OF PFDA) • BUREAU OF ANIMAL INDUSTRY EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION (BAI-EA) • NATIONAL FEDERATION OF EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION IN THE DEPARTMENT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (NAFEDA) • BUREAU OF CUSTOMS, EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION (BOCEA) • KATIPUNAN AT SANDIGAN NG MGA MANGGAGAWA AT KAWANI SA KALOOKAN (KASAMAKA-KALOOKAN)

Commitment to reform Napocor

THIS is in reference to the stories that came out in your paper regarding the plunder case reportedly filed against National Power Corp. president Jesus N. Alcordo.

As heads of the three workers' associations, we represent the 8,000-plus employees of the Napocor and we would like to take this opportunity to show our unequivocal support for our president.

Alcordo has been with the Napocor for only a short time, having assumed the leadership in February of this year. But early on, he communicated to us that his commitment would be focused on implementing reforms which would help the Napocor cope with the changing demands of the pre-privatization period. He fostered an open, transparent atmosphere in the corporation which has led to a greater sense of empowerment for the workforce. He made it a point to make the workforce part of the consultative process and obtained our commitment to support the reforms he thought should be done to make the Napocor more efficient and competitive.

We vouch for Alcordo's honesty and integrity. He has proven himself to be a true gentleman in his dealings with us and we have in fact asked him to stay longer here at the Napocor. We need the kind of leadership that he has shown to us as we move to the critical phase of preparing for its eventual privatization.

We feel hurt that Alcordo is being victimized by reports fed to the press regarding the "O Ilaw" program. The allegations raised against him and the Napocor's participation in the barangay electrification program have been answered point by point before. We would like to reiterate that all transactions were aboveboard and within the ambit of the law. We would like to reiterate our full support for Alcordo and our fervent hope that he would change his mind and continue the reforms that he has started here at the Napocor. We need his able guidance and integrity in these turbulent times.—**EDMUND ANGULUAN, president, Napocor Executives Association; ABNER ELERIA, president, Napocor Employees Consolidated Union; ARMANDO JAVIER, president, Napocor Employees' Welfare Union, National Power Corp., Corner Quezon Avenue and Agham Road, Diliman, Quezon City**

Economics of scoring 'pogi' points

THE INTERNATIONAL Monetary Fund (IMF) has been demonized. Anything that the IMF utters is a curse on the Filipino people.

Why? Because it is the only institution that recommends politically unpalatable economic policies.

The result of the IMF's recent review mission as well as its policy recommendations will surely be condemned. That's the way things go in the Philippine policy arena. Policy debates are seldom based on sound arguments, instead they turn into an arena for psychological warfare. He who has the most politically appealing case no matter how twisted wins, to the detriment of the less articulate and marginalized sector.

There is really nothing new with the findings and recommendations of the IMF review mission. Increasing the excise taxes on oil products, and raising the value added tax (VAT) and contributions to the Social Security System and the Government Service and Insurance System have been proposed several times in the past to maintain the country's fiscal balance. Surely, these measures have been dancing in the minds of our policymakers.

It makes sense to consider these measures. Increasing the excise tax on oil products will immediately result in higher revenues because it is easy to collect. Raising the value-added tax will strengthen the government's fiscal position and provide for stronger financing capacity.

But these are highly inflationary and ergo, politically costly.

An economic guru once said that governments should work on equity not by granting tax exemptions and subsidies left and right but by working on sound expenditure management—infrastructure development, social services and education.

But all these are not possible given the track record of our government. For so long, government's fiscal management has been guided by the need to score "*pogi* points."

An excellent paper authored by former Monetary Board member Cayetano Paderanga, titled "Recent Fiscal Developments in the Philippines," gives a thorough analysis of the government's fiscal management. He points to the fact that our yawning budget deficit, which has been the case except in the period from 1994 to 1997, can be "traced to the large revenue shortfall relative to the rapid implementation of large public investment projects."

Clearly, this is unsound budget management. But who wouldn't want a government that does not reduce the worker's take-home pay but still goes off on a spending spree for the public?

However, our government is now running out of "*pogi*" measures. Paderanga's paper shows that in recent years, our budget deficits have been financed largely by foreign borrowings. He says the historical volatility of our economy from 1975 to the present can be traced mainly to the cause and effect of the deterioration of the government's fiscal position. To score "*pogi* points," expenditures on economic services such as education and infrastructure development are being cut while allocations for the "pork barrel" are being increased. The national government's budget helps politicians earn "*pogi* points" instead of encouraging a sustainable economic growth. All this while the country's economic managers are trying to contain a ballooning budget deficit.

Paderanga points out that to improve our economic prospects, there is a need to close the fiscal gap without sacrificing essential physical, social and human capital investments. He proposes reforms in tax administration and our complicated tax structure. He also says the government must cut back on personnel services, cut the red tape and awaken the bureaucracy from lethargy.

But many would rather condemn the IMF than think of measures that would put us in a better fiscal position.

If the national government cannot summon the will to take the road less traveled and increase tax rates as the IMF has proposed, then the only alternative is undertake reforms in governance. The strict monitoring and auditing measures at the Bureau of Internal Revenue have paid off. The BIR has exceeded its collection target of about P400 billion. There's the beacon of hope. The national government should take steps to encourage other agencies to match the BIR's performance.—**ELLEN CAIN, program officer for public governance, Foundation for Economic Freedom Inc., Ground Floor, Rm 105-106, Cristina 1 Bldg., 71 Kalayaan Ave., QC**

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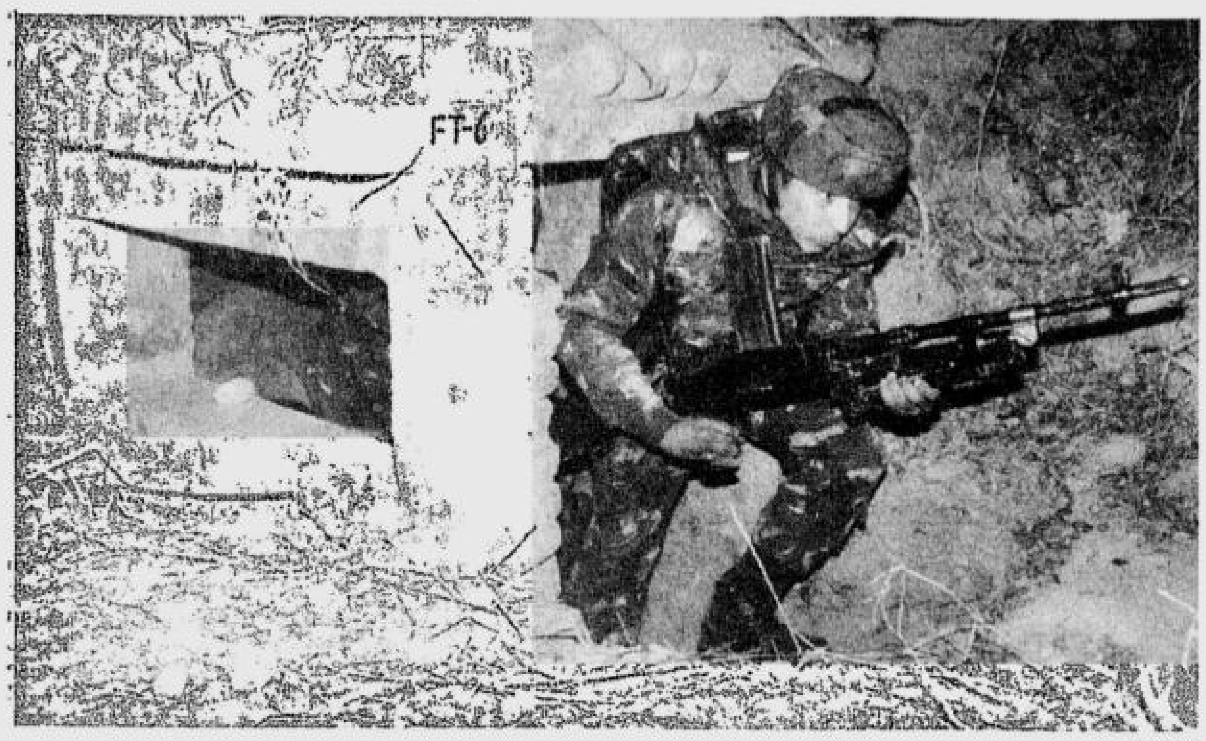
The WORLD

LUVERNE B. GUECO, EDITOR

India, Pakistan exchange fire



REUTERS

AN INDIAN soldier runs out of a bunker carrying a machine gun in Chamb sector about 65 km from Jammu, late Dec. 26. India and Pakistan sent military reinforcements to their border as tension escalated between the two nuclear rivals.

NEW DELHI/ISLAMABAD—Indian and Pakistani forces fired on each other across their border in divided Kashmir overnight as India considered new sanctions against Pakistan and the United States urged talks between the nuclear rivals.

India's reinforcement of the heavily defended Himalayan region of Kashmir was almost complete, but troops, aircraft and equipment were moving toward the western border with Pakistan in other states, Indian defense officials said.

Pakistan called on India to move its forces back from the border to peacetime positions and urged that the two countries settle their differences through talks.

"Our deployment is almost complete in Jammu and Kashmir," said an Indian defense official in Jammu, the winter capital of India's only Muslim-majority state.

Indian defense officials said there were no Indian casualties in the latest of what have become daily exchanges between the two sides in disputed Kashmir, where winter snow is now dogging operations.

The Indian Cabinet's security committee was due to meet late on Thursday to consider fresh action against Pakistan, most likely diplomatic and economic sanctions, including the withdrawal of overflight rights for Pakistan International Airlines and a scaling down of Pakistan's mission in New Delhi.

Indian defense officials said between 60 to 80 trainloads of fresh troops and equipment had arrived in Jammu in the past week to reinforce the 450,000-strong force in the state.

India, which wants its neighbor to crack down on Muslim militants fighting its rule in Kashmir, described its deployment of fighter jets near the border as a precaution.

Pakistan told India it would move only the "bare minimum" of its forces to the border.

The United States designated the two Pakistan-based guerrilla groups India blames for the Dec. 13 attack on its parliament, which triggered the latest tension, as foreign terrorist organizations, adding support to India's demands that Pakistan should shut them down.

The United States has engaged in a frantic diplomatic effort to keep a lid on tension between India and Pakistan after radically improving relations with Pakistan to reward President Pervez Musharraf for supporting the US-led war in neighboring Afghanistan.

"Any conflict between the two countries can have no good result for either," US State Department spokesperson Philip Reeker said in Washington on Wednesday. "They need to resolve their differences through dialogue."

India, which accuses Pakistan of thrusting an unwanted war upon it, said on Wednesday its missile systems were in position and it had deployed fighter jets to bases along the border, where terrified villagers were fleeing their homes.

The military build-up is the biggest in almost 15 years involving the two countries, who combined have almost two million active troops and another million reserves and can field more than 5,000 tanks, 5,000 artillery pieces and 1,000 fighter jets, as well as having nuclear weapons capabilities.

India blames the suicide attack on parliament, in which 14 people including the five assailants were killed, on two groups fighting its rule in Kashmir.

Reuters

N. Korea threatens measures against Japan over ship 'smear'

SEOUL—North Korea Thursday warned of countermeasures against Japan for "groundlessly" linking the Stalinist state to a suspected spy ship which sank after a firefight with the Japanese coastguard.

A foreign ministry spokesperson denied any involvement in the weekend incident and accused Tokyo of "an unpardonable smear campaign" against Pyongyang.

He accused Japan of having "used force of arms" to sink what remains an "unidentified ship" beyond its territorial waters.

The boat sank late Saturday after taking a direct hit in the hull from Japanese coastguard guns while in China's exclusive economic zone.

"The DPRK (North Korea) will take relevant countermeasures depending on the future attitude of Japan toward the incident," the spokesperson told the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), the North's official mouthpiece.

He did not specify exactly what actions would be taken but said the North would heighten its vigilance against Japan.

"The DPRK is compelled to maintain the highest degree of vigilance against a series of plots hatched by the Japanese authorities to escalate their anti-DPRK campaign," he warned.

"Japan's moves for remilitarization and overseas expansion have reached a very perilous phase."

The ship, which had violated the Japanese waters, has so far not been conclusively identified despite reports in the Japanese media quoting Tokyo officials saying the vessel was North Korean.

Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda said in reaction Thursday: "Our country has not yet determined it (the ship) was North Korean. We think North Korea's various statements are not necessarily appropriate."

But Fukuda said his government was determined to pin down the origin of the ship.

Japan's coastguard has retrieved the bodies of two Asian men with Korean character writing on them, including a lifejacket tag, from the sunken ship.

Japanese media said Wednesday that Japan's Defense Agency had monitored radio communications between North Korea and the mysterious ship, which indicated it might have been smuggling stimulant drugs.

AFP

YEARENDER

Afghanistan undergoes profound sea change, courtesy of Bin Laden

KABUL—The terrorists who smashed planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on Sept. 11 killed thousands of innocents but also sounded the death knell for the fanatical Taliban regime in faraway Afghanistan.

As 2001 drew to a close the hated Islamic fundamentalists were just a bad memory. A power-sharing interim government had taken office, pledged to rebuild and bring peace to the country.

The ousted Taliban had paid the price for sheltering suspected terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida followers since 1996.

A fragile peace prevailed in much of Afghanistan after 23 years of conflict.

International attention and goodwill—at least for the moment—was focused on one of the world's most devastated nations.

Extremist Islam

The year started with the Taliban still firmly in power, imposing its extremist brand of Islam on the 90 percent of the country it controlled and battling the opposition Northern Alliance in the remaining 10 percent.

But Bin Laden was already dominating the Afghan agenda.

On Jan. 20th United Nations sanctions on the Taliban came into force after its leader Mullah Mohammad Omar refused to hand over Bin Laden—at that stage wanted for the 1998 attacks on US embassies in east Africa.

The Taliban militants were undeterred. On Feb. 14 they ordered the United Nations Special Mission for Afghanistan to close its Kabul office.

Just two weeks later the militias outraged the world when it began demolishing statues across the country, including two towering ancient stone Buddhas in the Bamiyan province.

On Aug. 5 two Americans, two Australians, four Germans and 16 Afghans were rounded up and accused of preaching Christianity, a capital crime.

On Aug. 21 Western diplomats left Afghanistan in frustration at failure to secure access to their nationals.

Masood assassination

On Sept. 9—two days before the attacks in the US—opposition military commander and folk hero Ahmad Shah Masood was assassinated by two suicide bombers posing as journalists.

The United States swiftly blamed the attacks in New York and Washington, which killed some 3,000 people, on Bin Laden and his al-Qaida network.

As the threat of retaliation loomed large, tens of thousands of Afghans fled major cities—swelling to some six million the number of internally displaced people or overseas refugees.

The Taliban insisted they would not hand over the former Saudi dissident without proof. On Sept. 20 the country's Islamic clerics called on the regime to ask him to leave voluntarily.

US bombing

The US was unimpressed. On Oct. 7 the riposte began, with American warplanes bombing targets in most major cities.

With Masood in his grave, the Northern Alliance—which had been fighting the Taliban since they swept to power in Kabul in 1996—was considerably weakened.

For a month there was an apparent stalemate, until the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif fell to the opposition on Nov. 9.

Backed by relentless US air strikes, the alliance made more dramatic breakthroughs. Kabul fell without a fight after the Taliban fled on the night of Nov. 12.

Kabulis rejoiced in the streets at the end of the regime, which had banned all forms of entertainment and excluded girls from school and women from the workplace.

Last redoubt

Kandahar, the Taliban's last redoubt, fell on Dec. 7 but its leader Mullah Omar escaped.

Attention then focused on Tora Bora in the east, where Bin Laden's al-Qaida followers—and possibly the man himself—were holed up in a mountain fortress created from a natural cave complex.

Afghan militias backed by fierce US air attacks claimed victory on Dec. 16. But hundreds of al-Qaida—mostly Arab—fled to neighboring Pakistan.

Bin Laden, the world's most wanted man with a P25-million price on his head, remains unaccounted for.

A UN-backed conference in Bonn of four Afghan factions agreed on Dec. 5 on an interim power-sharing government headed by Hamid Karzai. The world pledged aid to rebuild the shattered country.

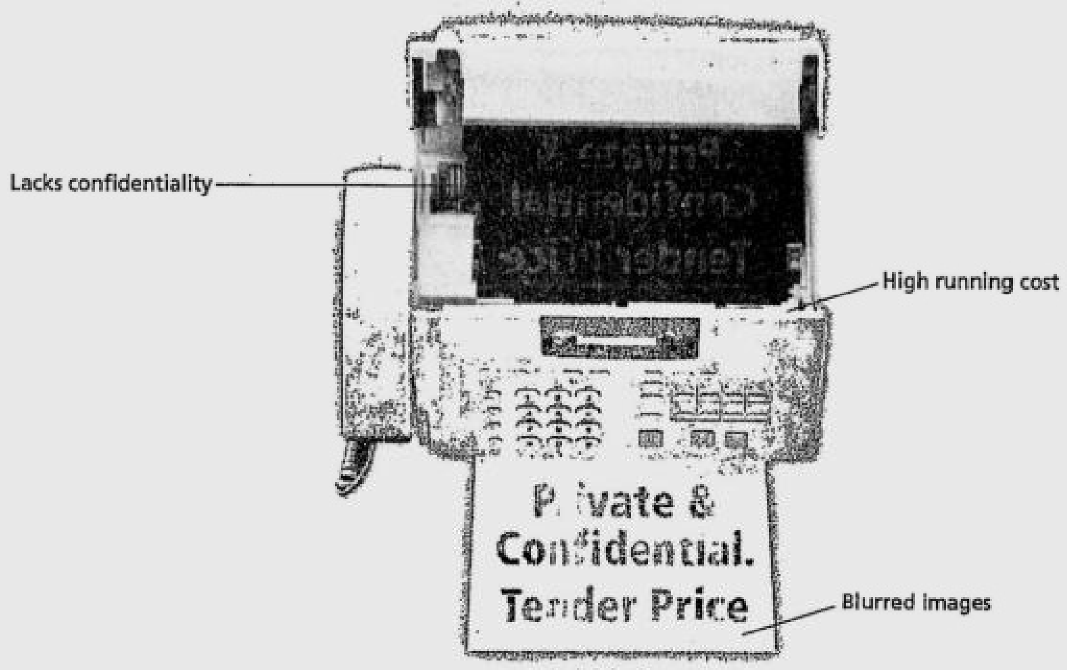
Big powers who turned their backs after the end of the Soviet occupation in 1989 promised not to forget Afghanistan for a second time.

But world leaders stayed away from the Dec. 22 swearing-in of Karzai and his Cabinet. They seemed to be holding back to see if the new government can work.

If it does unravel under pressure from frustrated factions and warlords, Afghanistan will again lurch back into war—and the world may again look the other way.

AFP

Problems, problems.



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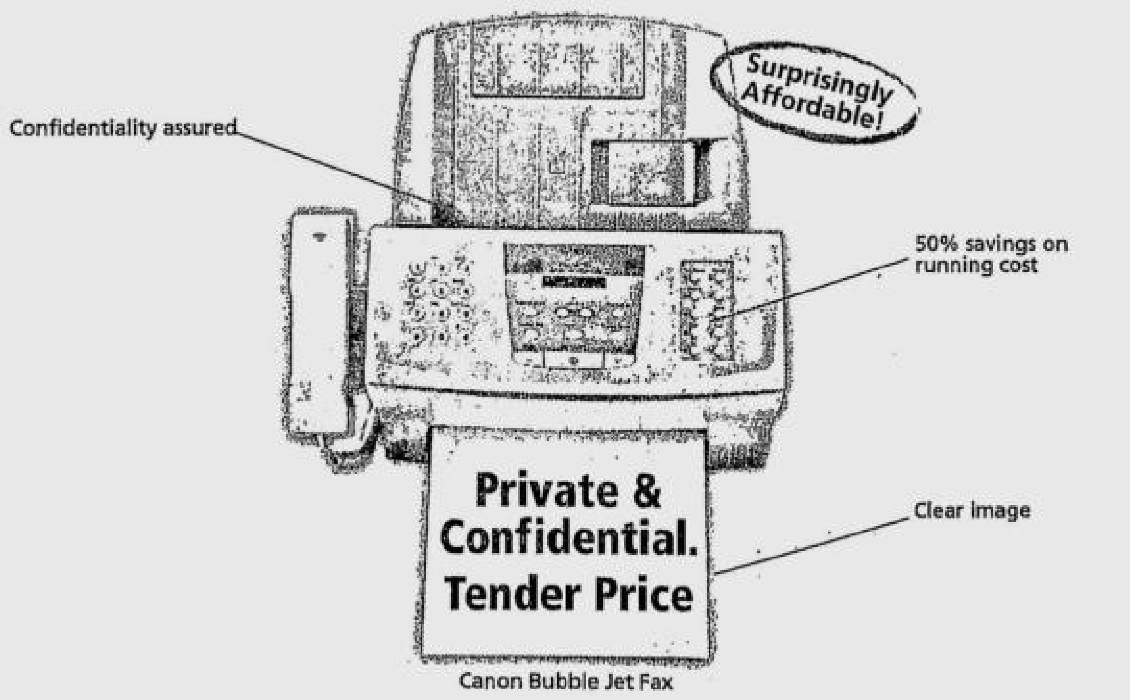
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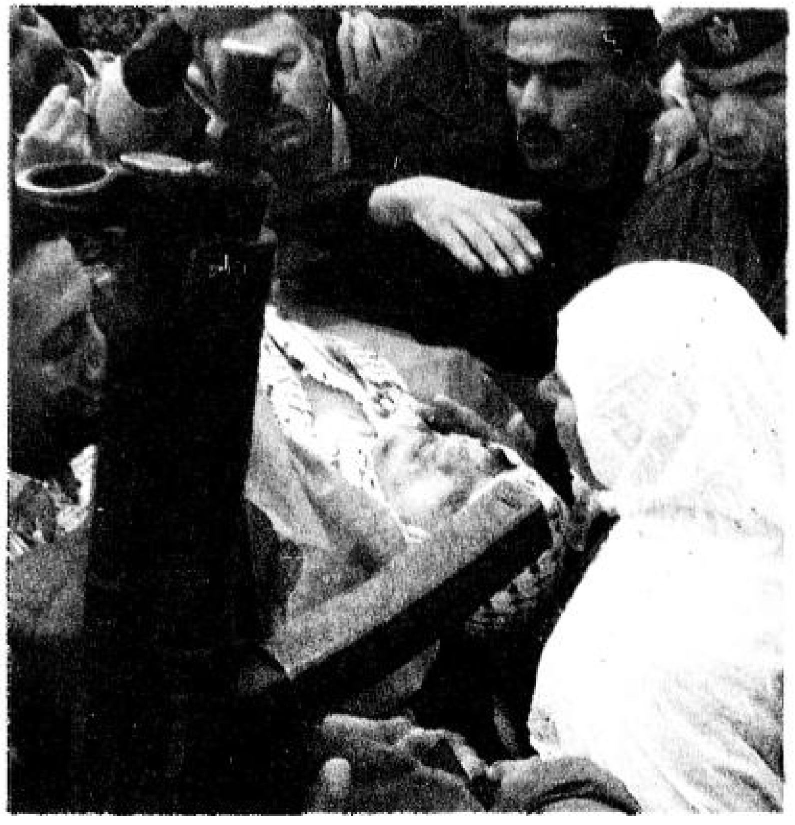

A SLAIN Palestinian, a Fatah member, is carried for funeral in the West Bank city of Hebron Dec. 26. The Fatah member was killed in an exchange of fire during a Christmas Eve attack by Palestinian gunmen in the West Bank. REUTERS

Israelis kill Palestinian

JERUSALEM—An Israeli helicopter gunship killed a Palestinian during a battle between soldiers and gunmen in the West Bank on Wednesday in fresh violence that overshadowed a rare session of security talks between the sides.

Israeli and Palestinian security officials held a meeting on the Gaza Strip border at which a senior Palestinian security official said they had agreed to allow repairs of Gaza international airport, damaged by Israeli troops.

The official, Maj. Gen. Abdel-Razek al-Majaydeh, also said Israel agreed to extend the hours of the Rafah border crossing to Egypt and ease curbs on Gazan workers and merchants entering Israel. Israeli officials had no immediate comment.

The Palestinian Authority accused Israel of trying to "destroy stability and calm" by maintaining a crippling blockade of Palestinian areas and sending its forces into Palestinian-ruled areas in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The gun battle and an earlier Israeli raid on a West Bank village challenged comments by Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres that his recent talks with a Palestinian official meant relations between the two sides were no longer at rock bottom.

"Chances for peace had reached the lowest point, the zero point, in relations between the Palestinian authorities and Israel," Peres said during a visit to Ukraine.

"But I think we have departed from zero point and begun to move," the lone dove in Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's ruling coalition said about his talks with Ahmed Korei, speaker of the Palestinian parliament.

The Peres-Korei talks grabbed weekend headlines when Israel's biggest newspaper, Yedioth Ahronoth, reported the two men had drafted an interim peace plan for a Palestinian state on 42 percent of the West Bank and most of the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian officials said the two men had put together talking points for a permanent deal.

"I cannot talk now about encouraging positions, nor can I say that these meetings have yielded results, but there are ideas under discussion and the Palestinian leadership is studying and considering them," Palestinian Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabbo told Voice of Palestine radio on Wednesday.

Abed Rabbo has said the reported peace plan, which falls far short of Palestinian territorial demands for a state, would be a non-starter because it would keep Palestinians in cantons.

Palestinian ambulance workers said a Palestinian bystander was killed by fire from an Israeli helicopter on the outskirts of the West Bank town of Jenin as the Army fought gunmen nearby.

The Israeli Army said helicopters shot at two gunmen who were involved in the exchange of fire, hitting one of them. It said four soldiers were lightly hurt in the fighting.

The Army said the gun battle began after its forces opened fire at a squad of armed Palestinians and gave chase, driving them into an abandoned building in a Palestinian-ruled area of Jenin where the fighting continued.

Television footage showed the Palestinian gunmen taking cover in houses and behind walls as they fired at Israeli troops with automatic weapons. The Army said it fired a tank round at the gunmen who were firing grenades during the battle.

Palestinian witnesses and medics said the skirmish erupted after Israeli tanks entered a residential area and drew Palestinian fire. They said four other bystanders were hurt. *Reuters*

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HONDA

Australia fights 3rd day of bush fires

SYDNEY—Thousands of firefighters fought fierce bush fires ringing Sydney for a third day on Thursday although cooler, calmer weather was giving some respite.

Police and fire officials said dozens of blazes—some of them caused by arson—had destroyed about 150 homes, mostly south and west of the city, as high winds over Christmas fanned the flames keeping firefighters on the retreat.

More than 1,000 people have been evacuated after a bleak holiday but there were no reports of death or serious injury.

More than 100 bush fires—some described as "fire storms"—have blazed across New South Wales (NSW) state since Christmas Day, destroying homes, closing road and rail links and cutting electricity supplies to some 12,000 homes.

This summer's outbreak of blazes is the worst since 1994, when bush fires roared into the Sydney suburbs, killing four people.

Firefighters had hoped to take advantage of the drop in wind speed and temperatures to launch backburning operations in a bid to starve the fires.

But Rural Fire Service spokesperson John Winter said fluctuating winds made the plan impossible in some areas, particularly around some of the worst fires on Sydney's southern outskirts.

He said another big fire was five to 10 km from homes in the Burragorang region in the south of the Blue Mountains. Plans for possible evacuations were being prepared.

"We are urging people not to panic," Winter said. "If people follow directions and listen to advice, then their safety should be assured," he told Australian Broadcasting Corp radio.

Meteorologists forecast higher temperatures and stronger winds on Friday and at the weekend.

At Warrimoo in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney six homes were burned to the ground on Wednesday, leaving metal roofs twisted on the ground amid piles of bricks from collapsed walls and burnt-out washing machines and fridges.

Cross Street residents Cecily Jackson and husband Lance were trapped in their house when a wall of flame engulfed the house.

"I was just getting a bucket of water when the laundry door exploded," Cecily Jackson said.

"We all crouched by the front door beneath the smoke. We had our dog `Pookie' with us and we were all just praying. It seemed to go on forever but it was just a few minutes. The flames eased and we opened the front door and decided it was time get out. We are Christians. We trusted our God and he looked after us." *Reuters*

Refugees storm Channel Tunnel in bid for UK

COQUELLES, France—Several hundred refugees stormed into the Channel Tunnel overnight in a desperate bid to seek asylum in Britain, before being rounded up by French security forces.

It was the latest in a series of attempts to reach Britain by refugees being held at an overcrowded Red Cross center near the French port of Calais.

The attempted break-in disrupted traffic through the tunnel for most of the night, as French security forces including riot squads, used tear gas to turn back the mostly Asian and Middle Eastern asylum seekers.

"It's the first time the assault has been so violent," Alain Bertrand, the managing director of Eurotunnel which runs the undersea transport service, said after traffic resumed early on Wednesday.

The first wave of some 150 people smashed through an electric fence late Tuesday and got some way into the tunnel before they were caught and pushed back by French gendarmes and border police, officials said.

The second group of some 400 people were stopped from going far into the tunnel by an automatic steel gate, which was used to seal off the structure.

A Eurotunnel spokesperson said the migrants could have had few illusions about their chances of getting to England on foot through the 50 km of the tunnel.

"It is obvious that they wouldn't have been able to walk all the way to England. It was more of a protest movement by the refugees in a bid to attract media attention," said Francois Borel.

"We were taken by surprise by the scale of the attack," he admitted. "But it was doomed to failure and they knew it."

"Since we launched a zero tolerance policy, the number of refugees trying to get across via the tunnel has dropped enormously," he said. "They know they have no chance of getting through."

Some 100 people were arrested in all during Tuesday's incidents, but by late Wednesday only four remained in custody and were due to appear in court on Thursday.

Before tunnel traffic resumed, large numbers of police had to be drafted to search to tunnel entrance and make sure no more migrants were inside. *AFP*

Across the NATION

TONY BERGONIA, Assistant Editor

Abra town mayor killed

BAGUIO CITY—Armed men believed to be New People's Army rebels ambushed and killed on Thursday Mayor Jose Segundo of the remote town of Tubo in Abra.

Reports reaching the INQUIRER said Segundo was on his way to the poblacion on a horseback when the gunmen fired at him in Barangay Tubtuba in Tubo, reports said.

His bodyguards, who were a pace behind him, were not able to fire back at the attackers. They tried to rush him to a hospital in Cervantes town in Ilocos Sur but he died along the way, reports said.

Police said they believed NPA rebels were behind the ambush. Segundo, also a known faith healer, had been receiving letters from the NPA demanding that he pay a campaign fee for travelling to the interiors of Tubo, police said.

Police could not say if the attack on Segundo was timed for the 33rd founding anniversary of the Communist Party of the Philippines on Dec. 26.

On Dec. 30 two years ago, NPA rebels assassinated former rebel priest Conrado Balweg, also an Abrenian and head of the Cordillera People's Liberation Army, for his alleged blood debts to the people.

In Central Luzon, the Christmas ceasefire between government troops and NPA rebels has been holding, Army officials said. The ceasefire started on Dec. 15 and would end on Jan. 6 next year.

But Brig. Gen. Alberto Braganza, chief of the Army's 7th Division based in Fort Magsaysay in Nueva Ecija, said six units under him remained on heightened alert to "protect the communities."

At Camp Olivas in Pampanga, some 8,000 policemen were also placed on heightened alert since Dec. 21 until after Dec. 29.

A memorandum from the Philippine National Police directorate for operations said police should be on guard against "atrocities" that the NPA might conduct to "gain media mileage."

The memorandum also asked for vigilance against "other threat groups," which were not named.

Crimes

There was no respite from crimes and violence this Christmas, reports from the regional police headquarters in Central Luzon and the Pangasinan police showed.

Top police officials warned people to be vigilant against robbers who intensify their criminal activities during the Yuletide season.

In Tarlac City, movie actor Jestoni Alarcon lost P17,000 cash and other valuables to robbers on Christmas eve.

Police said Alarcon parked his Toyota Hi-Ace at the Hacienda Luisita when robbers took his credit cards, jewelry, a registered gun and cash worth P17,000 from his car.

In the City of San Fernando, a three-year-old girl was raped by a 23-year-old man on Christmas Day.

Even inmates at the city jail were enraged by the act that they tried to maul suspect Marvin Ordoñez, according to Insp. Anna Liza Guzman, chief of this city's women and children protection desk.

Ordoñez was charged with statutory rape.

In Pilar, Bataan, Ricardo Roxas, who is a suspect in the killing of village chief Nazario Santos Jr. on Dec. 25, was charged with murder on Thursday before the municipal trial court there.

Roxas, however, is still in hiding.

In Nueva Ecija, passengers of a Baliwag Transit Bus cruising along the San Jose City portion of the Maharlika Highway were divested of their cash and jewelry by five armed men two days before Christmas.

In many parts of Central Luzon, arrests appeared without let-up among jueteng collectors and pushers of shabu and marijuana.

In Pangasinan, Senior Supt. Rodolfo Mendoza, provincial police director, said from September to December, cases of petty theft have gone up, with men stealing household items like cooking wares, television sets, water pumps, clothes and even backyard animals like goats, chickens and cattle.

He said robbers intensified their activities during the holidays because they knew that people usually had money during those times.

Mendoza noted that because of economic hardship and lack of jobs, people resort to robbery to buy clothes and food for their family during the holidays.

Records showed that 12 major robberies believed to be staged by organized groups occurred in the province from September to December.

The biggest haul taken by criminals was P1 million from a money changer in Bautista town. *Nathan Alcantara and Yolanda Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau, and Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

5 Misuari loyalists die in attack

COTABATO CITY—At least five loyalists of ousted ARMM Gov. Nur Misuari were killed after they attacked military detachments in Maguindanao yesterday, the military said.

Major Julieto Ando, spokesperson of the Army's 6th Infantry Division based in Awang, Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao said the government suffered a lone fatality when followers of Misuari stormed at least four detachments in Sultan sa Barongis town.

Ando said some 200 rogue Moro National Liberation Front fighters, led by a certain commander Duma and a commander Garry, initially assaulted two bases of the Army's 40th Special Forces Battalion in Barangay Masulot, Sultan sa Barongis around 5:30 a.m.

Thirty minutes later, the same group attacked two detachments of the 11th Special Forces Company in Sitio Logpond where the soldier, whose name was being withheld, died.

Ando said the military had to launch air strikes against the attackers, after sensing that they were advancing towards the military's base in the poblacion area.

Two MG-520 attack helicopters pounded the group's position, while additional ground troops were deployed to the Liguasan Marsh.

Ando said Misuari's men have also teamed up with members of the Pentagon kidnap group in the area.

The harassment by alleged Misuari loyalists came two days after their companions ambushed and killed a dozen Marines and soldiers in Luuk, Sulu.

Eid Kabalu, spokesperson of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, raised concern about the renewed hostilities.

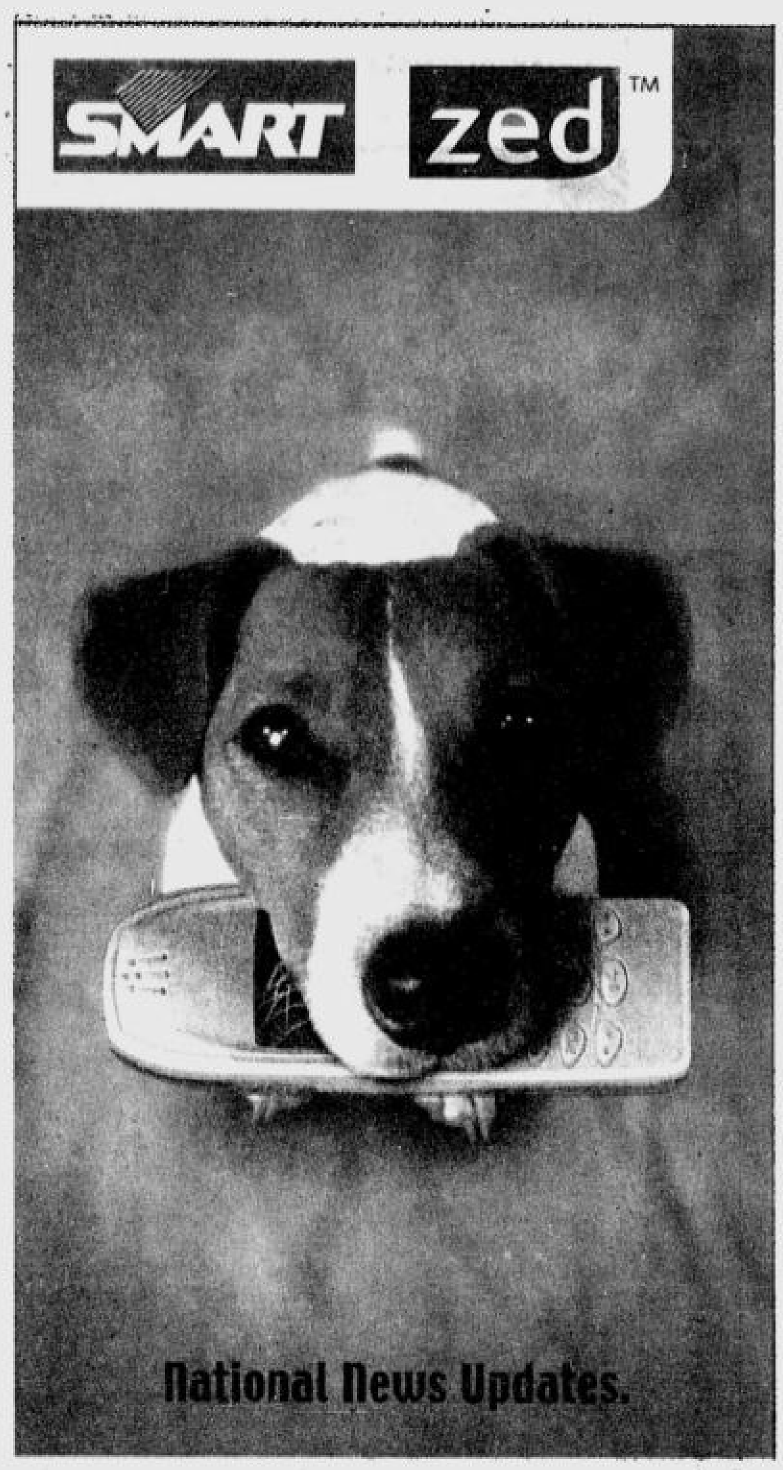
He cautioned the military against indiscriminate firing as this could endanger civilians living in the area.

Kabalu said it was also possible the skirmishes could affect areas where the MILF maintains communities, and might drag the rebel group into another confrontation with the military.

The MILF is engaged in peace talks with the government.

The Liguasan Marsh, which straddles the provinces of Sultan Kudarat, Maguindanao and Cotabato, is home to several armed groups including the MILF.

It is also the site of a government oil and gas exploration project. *Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau*



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2 missing in boat sinking

BACOLOD CITY—Two persons were reported missing and 32 others, including a police officer and his three children, were rescued when a boat they were riding in sank in the waters off E.B. Magalona town, Negros Occidental on Wednesday morning.

Editha Belarmia, 59, and her daughter Cherry Belle, 17, were reported missing by Editha's rescued daughter, Beverly.

Police investigators said the two missing passengers were believed trapped in the vessel when it went down.

Initial police investigation said the MV Ivan Blue was on its way to Barangay Tuburan, E.B. Magalona from Banate, Iloilo, when it sank after it was battered by huge waves.

Among the survivors were Chief Insp. Inocentes Capuno, deputy director of the Philippine National Police 6th Regional Mobile Group based in Negros Occidental, and his three young children.

He said the vessel left Banate at 9:30 a.m. and sank around 11 a.m., about 200 nautical miles from the coastal area of E.B. Magalona town.

Capuno said the motorboat went under after it was hit by huge waves. He said he was able to call the Coast Guard for help through his cellular phone before the vessel was engulfed by water.

Capuno said he and his three children clung to floating debris and stayed afloat in the cold water for two hours before fishermen rescued them.

E.B. Magalona police investigators have yet to determine the actual number of passengers who boarded the vessel pending verification with the Coast Guard station in Banate.

Police said they have listed 32 passengers rescued by the responding search-and-rescue groups from E.B. Magalona and Victorias City.

However, radio reports indicated that there were 48 on board the ill-fated vessel, including five crewmembers and the skipper, Joseph Yao. The vessel's owner was identified as Lorda Ignacio of Barangay Tomongtong in E.B. Magalona.

Some of the rescued passengers were brought for treatment of minor wounds and bruises at the Jose Locsin Memorial Hospital in Silay City and the E.B. Magalona Rural Health Center. *Carla Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau*

12TH NAT'L JAMBOREE

Not enough facilities, scouters complain

By Cynthia A. Borgueta
PDI Visayas Bureau

PALO, Leyte—The 12th National Boy Scout Jamboree participated in by about 9,000 boy scouts from the Philippines and the Asia-Pacific region opened here yesterday amid complaints of inadequate facilities.

Most of the delegates complained of lack of electricity and water in their camps. Many have to relieve themselves in open fields since the comfort rooms were not completed yet.

Several other groups were seen still working to make their campsites habitable. The campsite used to be part of a lagoon, which the boy scouts have to fill up with soil to enable them to put up their tents.

The campsite is located at the government center in Barangay Candahug, Palo, Leyte, about 12 kilometers from Tacloban City.

The one-week event, which started yesterday up to Jan. 2 next year, was participated in by boy scouts from all over the country, with guest participants from some Asia-Pacific countries like Cambodia, Greece, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Mongolia, Pakistan, Korea, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, The Netherlands, Australia, Germany, Hong Kong and Malaysia.

The province of Leyte led by Gov. Remedios Petilla hosts this year's national jamboree.

The delegations of Cavite, Surigao del Norte and Surigao del Sur, which have some 200 participants each, complained that aside from not having water in their campsites, they also could not do much during the night because of lack of electricity.

"We cannot cook, it is very difficult here during night time because we are groping in the dark," Gilcon Bandoy, team leader for Surigao del Sur, told the INQUIRER.

At least 189 delegates from Cebu City also complained they have to argue first with the staff of the Boy Scouts of the Philippines (BSP) to have their campsite provided with electricity.

"I did not expect this kind of preparation. I have to insist to the local BSP council that we should have electricity," a teacher from Cebu City's Abellana High School, who requested not to be named, told the INQUIRER.

The delegations from Cebu, Surigao del Norte and Surigao del Sur arrived on Dec. 25 but they said they got their water connection only yesterday morning.

But those who had the worst experience were the delegations of Compostela Valley and Davao del Norte.

Tess Ababon, assistant team leader for Davao del Norte, said she was dismayed to find out that the campsite assigned to the 206 delegates from the seven towns of her province was swampy.

"We requested for more filling materials but the host did not grant it," said Ababon, whose group was the first to arrive on Dec. 22. "I did not expect this, the physical preparation is somewhat late," she said.

Jose Rizal Pangilinan, BSP national president, countered that participants should not expect a comfortable campsite because "they are here not to spend their vacation but to have a Boy Scout jamboree."

Fallen pine cones for Christmas decors

By Desiree Caluza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

CHRISTMAS decors made from fallen pine cones and needles have become popular to budget-conscious shoppers. TOOTS SOBERANO

BAGUIO CITY—For as low as P20, one can own a Christmas tree or decor made of indigenous materials that Baguio craftsmen are famous for.

Christmas decors made from fallen pine cones and needles have become popular to budget-conscious shoppers in the city.

The production of these decors, according to local craftsmen, does not harm the environment as they source their materials from nature's "scraps."

"Before martial law was declared, our clients, particularly businessmen from Manila, would order loads of pine trees grown here and in Benguet to sell these as Christmas trees. But when martial law was declared, environmental laws started to restrict people from cutting trees," Ben Tactacyao, a craftsman, said.

Tactacyao said their clients, mostly flower shop owners and wood carvers, suggested the use of pine cones and pine needles in their Christmas decors.

The supply of pine cones then was not a problem.

Tactacyao said all they needed to do was trek the pine forests of Mt. Sto. Tomas and Camp John Hay here and Itogon, Benguet, to pick fallen pine cones and pine needles scattered around the area.

But when the Department of Environment and Natural Resources declared these as watershed areas, the craftsmen were barred from these areas, prompting them to look for other sources of pine cones.

Today, Tactacyao and his fellow craftsmen depend on the supply of pine cones from Mt. Province for their Christmas decors.

During production season, 10 sacks of pine cones are delivered weekly to craftsmen in Barangays Dontogan and Kias in Baguio City and Barangay Asin in Tuba, Benguet. A sack of pine cone costs P50-P80, according to Tactacyao.

Aside from flower shop owners, the Department of Trade and Industry became one of the regular clients of these craftsmen.

A 12-inch Christmas tree costs P20. The two-foot and three-foot high trees cost P60 and P120, respectively. The biggest tree, at 10 feet, costs P3,000.

Tactacyao said at least three people need to work for a week to produce a 10-foot high Christmas tree. The smallest tree, however, can be finished in only a day.

Tactacyao said orders for their Christmas decors usually start coming in September and their production starts in November to meet the demand.

But Tactacyao said their sales were not good during the recent Christmas seasons because of the economic crunch.

"Before, we would get at least 1,000 orders a month but now, we would only get 100 orders," he said.

Aside from Christmas trees, Tactacyao said, they also make lanterns, baskets and wreaths from pine cones. These items are popular among tourists.

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9 protected areas proclaimed in Bicol

LEGAZPI CITY—The government has proclaimed nine protected areas in the Bicol Region under the National Integrated Protected Areas System (Nipas).

Department of Environment and Natural Resources Bicol regional executive director Oscar Hamada said these areas cover a total of 20,996 hectares.

These are the Bicol Natural Park (5,202 hectares) in Camarines Sur and Camarines Norte; Mayon Volcano Natural Park (5,776 hectares) in Albay; Chico Island Wildlife Sanctuary (8 hectares) in Cawayan, Masbate; Malabungot Protected Landscape and Seascape (121 hectares) in Garchitorena, Camarines Sur; Naro Wildlife Sanctuary (110 hectares) in Cawayan, Masbate.

Also declared protected are the Abasaid-Matogdon-Mananap Natural Biotic Area (5,420 hectares) in San Vicente, San Lorenzo and Labo, Camarines Norte; Bongsanglay Natural Park (225 hectares) in Batuan, Masbate; Lagonoy Natural Biotic Area (441 hectares) in Lagonoy, Camarines Sur; and Bulusan Natural Park (3,672 hectares) in Casiguran, Barcelona, Irosin and Juban, Sorsogon province.

Hamada said each of these areas has a Protected Area Management Board (PAMB), which decides the allocation for budget, approved proposal for funding, decides matters relating to planning, peripheral protection and general administration of the area in accordance with the general management strategy.

The PAMB is composed of the DENR regional executive director, the provincial development officer of the province with territory within the protected area, a representative from the municipal government, a representative from each barangay covering the protected area, and at least three representatives from non-government groups or community organizations, and a representative each from other national government agencies involved in protected area management.

Under the Nipas Act of 1992 or RA No. 7586, a protected area refers to identified portions of land and water set aside because of their unique physical and biological significance, managed to enhance biological diversity and protected against destructive human exploitation.

Hamada said RA 7586 defines National Integrated Protected Areas System (Nipas) as the classification and administration of all designated protected areas to maintain essential ecological processes and life support systems, to preserve genetic diversity, to ensure sustainable use of resources found there, and to maintain their natural conditions to the greatest extent possible.

He added that under a previous proclamation, the Bicol Natural Park, the Mayon Volcano Natural Park and the Bulusan National Park were identified as national parks.

The wildlife sanctuary in Cawayan, Masbate and Protected Landscape and Seascape in Garchitorena, Camarines Sur were classified as wilderness areas; the Abasig-Matogdon-Mananap area as watershed forest reserve, and Bongsanglay as mangrove forest reserve.

The Nipas Act defines a natural park as a relatively large area not materially altered by human activity where extractive resource users are not allowed and maintained to protect outstanding natural and scenic areas of national and international significance for scientific, educational and recreational use.

Charge vs bus driver in mishap to be filed

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Police in Polomolok, South Cotabato said they are preparing a charge against the driver of a bus that killed at least 14 people in a collision on Christmas Day.

This developed as seven more died in a similar mishap in Cotabato province on Wednesday afternoon.

Alfredo Mosquera, driver of the Yellow Bus that slammed on a passenger van bound for Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, is still detained at the Polomolok jail.

Probers said Mosquera, a resident of Sulop, Davao del Sur, would be facing a charge of multiple murder through reckless imprudence.

The van passengers have just attended a family reunion in General Santos City and were on their way home to Koronadal City, some 58 kilometers from here, when the accident occurred.

Reports said the YBL bus, which was heading toward General Santos, first side-swept a motorcycle when it tried to overtake it.

Then it reportedly swerved to the left lane and slammed into the L-300 van.

In Kidapawan City, seven persons were killed, while 40 others were wounded after another passenger bus figured in a mishap in Cotabato province on Wednesday afternoon.

Reports reaching the INQUIRER said a Cotabato City-bound Weena Bus was cruising along the National Highway in Amas, Kidapawan City around 5 p.m., when it rammed a Fiera service vehicle. *Aquiles Zonio with reports from Rosa May de Guzman and Dennis Jay Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: The Eastern sections of Luzon and Visayas will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	HI 30° Lo 21°
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	HI 20° Lo 10°
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	HI 21° Lo 15°
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	HI 29° Lo 18°
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	HI 28° Lo 16°
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	HI 28° Lo 16°
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	HI 27° Lo 23°
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	HI 27° Lo 19°
Bacolod	Partly Cloudy	HI 29° Lo 23°
Roxas	Partly Cloudy	HI 28° Lo 24°
Cebu	Partly Cloudy	HI 30° Lo 23°
Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains	HI 30° Lo 23°
Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy	HI 31° Lo 25°
Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy	HI 30° Lo 23°
Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy	HI 29° Lo 21°
Davao	Partly Cloudy	HI 30° Lo 23°

Compiled by: Ray Loyosa, PDI Research/12/28/01

ROUNDUP

3 killed in robbery

TUGUEGARAO CITY—A couple, who owned a restaurant here, and their helper, were killed after their tricycle was strafed by suspected robbers in Barangay Linao West here on Saturday. Police identified the fatalities as Hermogenes Langcay, 52, his wife Carina, 55, and their helper, Mila Robles, 18. Antonio Pamittan, a dishwasher employed by the Langcays, was hurt in the attack and was taken to a local hospital. Reports said the Langcays and their employees were aboard a tricycle and were on their way home when two armed men, aboard another tricycle, fired at them. Police said the suspects took Carina's handbag that contained the restaurant's earnings for the day. *Estanislao Caldez, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Firecrackers explode

BOCAUE, Bulacan—A pile of pyrotechnic products being prepared for delivery to Metro Manila exploded here on Saturday night. Police said no one was hurt in the explosion but its impact burned power lines and triggered a power interruption in Barangay Turo. Police said workers of the PM Fireworks were loading about 3,000 pieces of *kuwitis* (skyrocket) in a jeep when a pile of the pyrotechnic products suddenly exploded.

Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Teacher found dead

VILLAVERDE, Nueva Vizcaya—A grade schoolteacher was found dead Friday in a ricefield in Barangay Pieza here, police reported Sunday. Insp. Ric Rosario, Villaverde police chief, identified the victim as Carmelita Esteban, 34, a teacher at Ambaguio Elementary School in upland Ambaguio town. Police said Esteban has been reported missing since Dec. 19. But Dr. Telesforo Ragpa, municipal health officer, in his autopsy report, said Esteban was killed barely three hours before her body was discovered.

Melvin Gascon, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Fire marshal relieved

DAGUPAN CITY—For supposedly requiring business permit applicants to buy a certain brand of fire extinguisher, the city's fire marshal was relieved on Monday. Senior Supt. Rolando Bandilla Jr., regional fire marshal, relieved Dagupan City Fire Marshal Aquilino Paras and detailed him at the Bureau of Fire Protection regional office in San Fernando City. Reports reaching Bandilla's office showed that Paras had asked business permit applicants to buy a fire extinguisher brand that he was endorsing in exchange for his signature in the permits.

Yolanda Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

CSC issues new rules

LEGAZPI CITY—Civil Service Commission Chair Karina Constantino-David announced that all requests for correction of government personnel's personal information appearing in the CSC records must be filed with its regional offices. David said the request should be accompanied by a copy of the birth certificate authenticated by the civil registrar of the city or municipality where the birth was recorded. David added that, unlike before, a birth certificate issued out of late registration now constitutes enough evidence to warrant a correction or change of personal information in the CSC records. *PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Masbate police nab robbers

LEGAZPI CITY—Police have arrested four suspects in a series of highway robbery incidents in Masbate and Ticao Island a few months ago. Police provincial officer-in-charge Antonio Enteria said his operatives caught Frisco Ramirez at the city pier and another three in Batuan town. Another team led by Insp. Rhoderick Campo arrested the three still unnamed suspects in Batuan shortly after Ramirez squealed on them. *Rey Nasol, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

City honors taxpayers

LEGAZPI CITY—For religiously paying significant amount of taxes every year, the Masbate City government cited 20 individuals and firms doing business in the city as its major "partners in city-building." The 20 led the 967 business firms whose payment of substantial taxes last year jacked up the revenues of the then Masbate town and helped elevate it into a city. Vice Mayor Ruby Sanchez said the city council will pass a resolution expressing appreciation for these firms.

Rey Nasol, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Loom weavers get help

LEGAZPI CITY—The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) distributed fabricated, jack-type handlooms to rural proponents. Among those who have received the handlooms are weavers of Baras, Catanduanes and Goa and Sangay, Camarines Sur. The Baras weavers recently received 10 more handlooms, donated by DOST and the Baras local government. The program, which gets a yearly funding of P625,000 from the DOST generated an aggregate income of P900,000 for the beneficiaries, among others, according to DOST Bicol regional director Eriberta Nepomuceno.

Rey Nasol, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Zambales mine workers face layoff

BY TONETTE OREJAS,
PDI Central Luzon Desk
AND DELFIN MALLARI JR.,
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

IBA, Zambales—At least 170 men, the last employed batch among more than 2,000 workers in this province's dying mining industry, face retrenchment starting Dec. 31.

Their contract with the Benguet Corp.-Masinloc Chromite Operations (BC-MCO) ends at the closing of this year, according to Vice Gov. Ramon Lacbain II.

Only the BC-MCO is operating to date. The Benguet-Dizon Mines and the Acoje Mining Corp. had closed shop since the 1980s.

The 170 workers were rehired last January from 400 permanent workers retrenched in 1998, said Perciverando Puno, president of the BC-MCO Coto Mining Workers Union.

Puno said the Union has asked the National Labor Relations Commission to reconsider the request to regularize the status of these remaining employees because "they have served continuously for more than a year."

The management, however, admitted having difficulty in staving off unemployment.

It said the market now for chromite is "really difficult to find."

Although able to maintain a large stock, it explained it could not compete with South Africa, which sells chromite at $80 per ton or half the price that Benguet sells the mineral in the world market.

It said it could not drop its selling price to the prevailing market level because its cost of production remains high.

"We are trying our very best to sustain the remaining market to help resuscitate the dying mining industry in Zambales," the firm was quoted as saying in a statement issued by Lacbain.

The national government, according to him, should begin intervening to revive the mining industry and stimulate employment in the province.

The help can come in the form of finding markets for Zambales chromite and tapping modern, cost-effective production technology, he said.

Return to work

In Lucena City, the striking workers of the JAC Liner Bus firm have returned to work after its management agreed to reinstate four Union members it previously dismissed.

Bus company owner Jaime Chua and the workers belonging to JAC Liner Inc. Employers Union reached the agreement on Wednesday afternoon at the office of Lucena City Mayor Ramon Talaga Jr. who acted as mediator.

Chua, however, stressed that all other demands of the strikers would be decided by the Department of Labor and Employment's National Reconciliation and Mediation Board-Region IV office.

Though the strikers agreed to return to work, however, they stressed that they would not hesitate to return to the picket line if Chua fails to honor the agreement.

The Union went on strike on Tuesday midnight due to the management's alleged failure to grant the law-mandated bonus and continuous indifference to the other immediate demands of its labor force.

"We waited for the Christmas bonus till midnight Tuesday but the management still ignored us," Peter Forneza, JAC conductor, told the INQUIRER.

The strike greatly affected the transportation of most passengers in the Lucena-Manila route as more than 70 JAC Liner buses were paralyzed at the Grand Central Terminal located in Barangay Ibabang Dupay along the national diversion road here.

On Nov. 27, the Union filed a notice of strike with the Dole's NRMB-Region IV office citing alleged Union busting, illegal dismissal, illegal deductions and other unfair labor practices.

"The drivers and conductors are the ones footing the bills for busted tires along the route. We also pay for the fuel that is in excess of the allotted gas, aside from also shouldering the cost of the washing of the bus," Forneza said.

Iliganons welcome reopening of NSC

BY RYAN D. ROSAURO
PDI Mindanao Bureau

ILIGAN CITY—Iliganons had a very special reason to celebrate Christmas.

After the city's economy was battered by the closure of its largest industrial locator, National Steel Corp. (NSC) two years ago, residents rejoiced after Malacañang announced to top local leaders that its mills will be running again next year.

Mayor Franklin Quijano revealed that a group of companies, led by Austrian steel giant Voeste Alpine, has won the rights to re-operate the NSC following intense bidding involving two local firms.

Quijano said no less than the President called him up in the morning of Dec. 22 to break the news. The mayor was then having a Christmas party with barangay leaders.

The local leaders, who also heard the announcement of Ms Macapagal through Quijano's mobile phone, burst into a long applause.

The NSC Evaluation Committee, headed by Trade Secretary Manuel Roxas II received the documents from the three bidders on Dec. 19 detailing, among other items, their business plans and sources of operating capital.

The documents were the final requirements set by the committee before it finally decides on who to award the rights to re-operate NSC.

"It is definitely a Christmas gift for our people," Quijano said in a telephone interview.

Former NSC employees leaped from their seats upon hearing Quijano's revelations.

Ronaldo Taqedo, who had been assigned at the hot mill, remained glued to the radio as Quijano announced the new development in an interview.

For the past two years, Taqedo and eight other former employees have been exchanging information about NSC.

Conchito Cruz, former board director of the National Steel Labor Union, said the reopening was the "greatest, most memorable gift" for the NSC employees this Yuletide season.

Cruz expressed confidence in the winning bidder who, he said, has a track record in terms of capacity to run the steel firm on a strategic basis.

"This is what NSC employees are asking for. A strategic investor running the company means more secure jobs, jobs that will not just be lost one day because of failure by management to run properly the entire operations," said Cruz, who represents about 600 NSC employees staking out for unpaid claims.

The employees, especially those who have yet to be paid separation pay and other benefits, have priority in employment in case the plant re-operates.

Since NSC was placed under receivership two years ago, the government has been hard-pressed in searching for a strategic investor to manage the bankrupt firm.

Labor group slams Gensan firms' chamber

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—A labor group here lambasted the General Santos City Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GSCCCI) for its alleged anti-labor stance after the chamber issued an advisory blacklisting 23 workers.

Ramon Jabar, president of the Federation of Free Workers (FFW), asked the chamber to rectify an earlier advisory it issued that blacklisted at least 23 dismissed workers of the East Asia Royal Hotel.

"In the interest of justice and fair play, we strongly urge the chamber to rectify their action immediately and refrain from issuing such statements," Jabar said in a letter to the business group.

On Oct. 19, the chamber urged its members not to hire the dismissed employees.

The advisory was circulated after the chamber accused the workers of destabilizing the operations of the East Asia Royal Hotel.

The 23 expelled workers used to work at the hotel's Babes Piano Bar, which stopped operations more than a month ago.

The expelled workers were active members of the East Asia Royal Hotel Employees Association (EARHEA).

This was not the first time the chamber got the ire of the labor sector for its alleged anti-labor statements.

Late last week, the General Santos City Government Employees Association (GSCGEA) also criticized the chamber for issuing a strongly worded statement opposing the grant of an additional P5,000 Christmas bonus to city hall employees.

The letter, signed by GSCCCI president Domingo Teng, accused the city hall employees of being "largely unproductive."

Teng later apologized after the more than 1,000 city hall employees called for a boycott of his establishments.

He claimed that his executive director, Flor de la Cruz, prepared the letter.

Teng said he did not bother to read the letter before he affixed his signature on it.

The city hall employees' union accepted Teng's apology, but some workers said they were still contemplating on filing libel charges against the chamber for the statement.

Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau

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Six Swiss banks . . .

(From page A1)

Good Government (PCGG) is asking Swiss authorities to transfer the still undetermined Marcos Swiss deposits to the Philippine National Bank's escrow account in accordance with an earlier Swiss court ruling.

So far, Swiss authorities had placed in escrow Marcos deposits from two Swiss banks, Credit Suisse and Swiss Banking Corp., which amounted to $356 million in 1986. The amount, which the PNB invested in several banks abroad, has since grown to $660 million because of interests.

The six other banks are presumed to be keeping the bulk of the Marcos secret deposits. The PCGG placed the Marcos assets in 1986 at $10 billion.

In a meeting with Swiss authorities on June 18, the PCGG and other officials demanded that the six banks furnish the Philippine government records of the Marcos accounts, according to documents obtained by the INQUIRER.

The Philippine government also demanded that the funds be transferred immediately to the PNB escrow account based on the Swiss court ruling of Dec. 15, 1998.

Members of the Philippine delegation asked Swiss authorities why the six banks had failed to give any documents on the Marcos funds.

The Swiss officials, who met with the Philippine delegation, included Rudolf Wyss, head of the Division for International Legal Assistance, Federal Office of Justice; Beat Frey, of the Division for International Legal Assistance Federal Office of Justice; Dieter Jann, examining magistrate, district attorney IV, Zurich; and, Serge Gamma, chief of section, division of international law, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

Among the Philippine government officials in the group were Justice Undersecretary Manuel Teehankee, then acting PCGG head Jorge Sarmiento and PCGG director for research Danilo Daniel.

The meeting was held at the Federal Department of Justice and Police in Switzerland.

It was the Swiss Federal Banking Commission that furnished the Philippine government the names of the banks in 1986.

"The (Swiss) Federal Banking Commission has furnished us a list of 13 banks, which made a confirmation in 1986 as maintaining or administering assets of the Marcos family, persons close to them and their companies," a document on the consolidated interim agenda of the Philippine government with Swiss officials said.

"Based on PCGG records, (these) six banks have not submitted documents on the Marcos assets," the document said.

A research done by the INQUIRER showed that some of the Swiss banks had ties with Union Bank of Switzerland, which allegedly at one point kept at least $13.2 billion of funds under Irene Araneta's client Account No. 885931.

UBS has denied keeping the Araneta or Marcos accounts, although its spokesperson in 1991 admitted that the bank kept "millions" of dollars in Marcos money.

Scweizerischer Bankverein, Basel was part of the Swiss Bank Corp. that merged with UBS to form UBS AG on July 1, 1998.

The merging of UBS and SBC in 1998 happened after news that UBS had been keeping $13.2 billion of Araneta accounts came out.

The bank Armand Von Ernst "has been a member of UBS AG's exclusive Private Banks Group since the merger between Swiss Bank Corp. and Union Bank of Switzerland in 1998," the bank's website said.

The Philippine team asked the Swiss officials for copies of documents regarding the Marcos funds kept in the six identified Swiss banks.

"Specifically, we want to be furnished with copies of the account opening forms, account statements and other documents involving the accounts referred to in their letters to the Swiss Federal Banking Commission declaring that they are holding and/or administering the assets of the Marcoses," the Philippine team said.

"Again, if the Marcos funds still exist in these banks, can they be transferred immediately to escrow accounts following the Dec. 15, 1998 decision?" the Philippine government officials asked of the Swiss authorities.

The PCGG is baffled with the phrase "With reservation that the bank, presumably does not fall under the obligatory notification" that the Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corp. had allegedly used.

Based on the documents about the meeting, the PCGG was largely in the dark about whatever records Swiss authorities were keeping about the Marcos accounts.

Up to now, the documents said the PCGG did not have copies of important documents regarding the Marcos assets' liquidation from the Credit Suisse and Swiss Bank Corp., the only two Swiss banks whose Marcos assets were allegedly frozen in 1986.

Philippine officials also asked the Swiss government that they be furnished with the documents submitted by the two Swiss banks to former Zurich magistrate Peter Cosandey in 1995.

"In the Aug. 21, 1995 order of former Examining Magistrate Judge Peter Cosandey, he directed Credit Suisse and Swiss Bank Corp. to submit to him the following documents:

- status of the assets before the liquidation;
- individual statements regarding the liquidation of the individual items;
- certification of transfer regarding the transfer and the assignment of the securities to PNB;
- statements of accounts from the start of the liquidation to the striking of the balance of the clients' accounts.

Osama returns to haunt world via Al-Jazeera

(From page A1)

its request that US networks not broadcast Bin Laden's recordings unedited and unreviewed.

"Those views remain unchanged," the official said.

Al-Jazeera, accused in the West of peddling Bin Laden's extremist views in a series of exclusive recordings, also remained as coy as ever about the tape.

The station refused to say exactly when it received the tape, but admitted keeping it "a few days" without saying why.

"We received the tape by express mail from Pakistan from an unidentified sender," an Al-Jazeera official told AFP.

"We received the recording a few days ago," said the official on condition of anonymity. "It was shot with a very old camera, which made it difficult for us to copy."

Speculation

But the broadcast sparked immediate speculation about the date when Bin Laden spoke, particularly after unconfirmed reports of his death.

There are strong indications the recording was made around Dec. 7, two months after the United States unleashed its war machine on Afghanistan's Taliban regime which protected Bin Laden and his al-Qaida combatants.

The respected Arabic-language newspaper Asharq al-Awsat noted that Bin Laden mentioned that he was talking "three months after the blessed strikes against world atheism and its leader, America, and around two months after the fierce crusade against Islam."

He also mentioned that "a few days ago, they bombed al-Qaida positions in Khost (eastern Afghanistan) and dropped—in what they said was a mistake—a radio-guided bomb on a mosque where ulamas were praying."

On Nov. 16 the US military said a 500-pound laser-guided bomb missed its target in Khost that day and damaged a mosque.

BIN LADEN: Our terrorism against America deserves to be praised . . .

Asharq al-Awsat concluded the recording must have been made between the end of November and early December, although an Al-Jazeera presenter said the tape showed Bin Laden was "still alive about two weeks ago."

More reactions

In London, a British official said Thursday that the new video of Bin Laden showed him "glorying" in his responsibility over the Sept. 11 attacks.

Peter Hain, a junior official at the foreign office, said the video only provided more proof of Bin Laden's guilt.

"What that tape showed is he is again admitting responsibility and glorying in the responsibility of that horrific terrorist attack," Hain told BBC radio in the first official British reaction.

"We are determined to find him and hunt him down, because he must be found and his al-Qaida network's capability to wage terrorist attacks eliminated. That is our objective."

In Jerusalem, an Israeli spokesperson brushed aside Bin Laden's televised speech linking his attacks on the United States to Washington's ties with the Jewish state, calling the comments "terrorist propaganda."

"We don't think that analyzing his words and dwelling on this serves any purpose," said Israeli government spokesperson Arieh Meckel.

"Don't we know what Bin Laden is? Don't we know what he did and what he is capable of doing? Whatever he says or doesn't say is really not the issue, it's terrorist propaganda," he said, echoing Washington's own assessment of a tape broadcast overnight.

"To deal with terrorists, we need to do it the way that America and Great Britain and some of the allies are doing right now, and we back their efforts 100 percent," said Meckel.

Hunt continues

In Afghanistan, about 500 US Marines are reportedly on standby for rapid deployment to the mountains around Tora Bora to track down remnants of Bin Laden and remnants of his al-Qaida network still holed up there.

US and British commandos working with anti-Taliban allies have been moving from cave to cave in the Tora Bora area searching for Bin Laden, wanted for allegedly masterminding the Sept. 11 terrorist strikes against the United States that left some 3,000 people dead.

The New York Times said Thursday the United States was offering weapons, money, winter clothing and other incentives to Afghan forces to take the lead in searching the Tora Bora complex to reduce risks to US troops, who would have to be housed in a predominantly anti-American area.

The deployment of US Marines has been put on hold while Afghan commanders are pressed to probe the area.

"It is a matter of finding the right mix of incentives to get them to play a more active role," a senior military official in Washington said. "If we are successful, they will do it."

As the hunt continues, a new list of al-Qaida fugitives has been released in recent days in Jalalabad. The list contains nine names, with Bin Laden as its head, The Washington Post said Wednesday. ***AFP***

Terrorism takes spotlight away from new China

(From page A1)

Pashtun tribal leader Hamid Karzai, interim prime minister of the fledgling administration, faces a task that has bedeviled many an Afghan leader—uniting tribes who know war far better than peace.

In neighboring Pakistan, uneasiness remains among Muslims who object to President Pervez Musharraf's decision to support the United States.

Unpredictable

An unpredictable element: Hundreds of Pakistani men are returning from "holy war" in Afghanistan after the vanquishing of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida strongholds.

Next door in India, Muslim rebels are waging an often-violent insurgency to free the Jammu-Kashmir region from New Delhi's control.

The volatile conflict is the main sticking point in perennially uneasy relations between Pakistan and India, South Asia's two nuclear powers.

As all this unfolds, overwhelmingly Islamic Central Asian countries, especially Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, are trying to put down extremists at home while showing off their commitment to the war on terrorism.

The idea is to help the United States without alienating Russia, thus securing American aid and access to the outside world.

The two countries' shared borders with Afghanistan make them geographically pivotal to both military and relief operations in Afghanistan.

In the Philippines, the violent Abu Sayyaf insurgency, which favors kidnapping and grisly killing, is still sowing disorder as President Macapagal-Arroyo's military hops island to island in pursuit.

Ousted President Joseph Estrada's high-profile corruption trial is expected to continue during the year's opening months.

In Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, President Megawati Sukarnoputri must balance her people's views and her international opposition to Islamic extremist terrorism.

Japan, like many Asian nations that boomed during the 1990s, is struggling to get its economy moving. And for the first time since it surrendered at the end of World War II, it is committing military forces overseas to support anti-terrorism operations.

Reunification talks between the two Koreas are stalled for now after Pyongyang pulled inward in response to Seoul's stepped-up security after the terrorist attacks on America.

US-China ties

And China? Its relations with the United States improved markedly in the post-Sept. 11 world as both nations realized they had far more immediate things to worry about than each other. But other bedevilments loom large.

Among them: The Chinese government worries that an occasional, low-level rebellion in its heavily Muslim northwest could gain momentum with help from Muslim extremists who no longer have Afghanistan as an unfettered base of operations.

Beijing's leaders also are pondering how to handle an election victory by supporters of Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian, whom China's communist government reviles and who has not come out in favor of the reunification that the mainland demands.

The party also must find replacements for several aging top officials, among them party head and President Jiang Zemin, who are expected to start relinquishing their posts next fall.

Succeeding them will be a new generation of leaders expected to carry the nation's philosophy—"socialism with Chinese characteristics"—even more toward a changing international, community and further from the ideas of Mao Zedong, founding leader of the People's Republic of China. ***AP***

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Ramos sees 'gray area' in Constitution

(From page A1)

run in 2004)," Gonzales said.

"He'll be contesting the incumbent President and if that happens, it will be FVR who will be breaking up the party," he added.

Both Gonzales and Rep. Jose Apolinario Lozada Jr., another Lakas member, said President Macapagal-Arroyo should make her intentions clear, at least to the party.

"I think she should already be looking at 2004 without necessarily deviating from her duty as President," Lozada said.

But while it is widely believed that Ms Macapagal will run in the 2004 presidential polls, her spokesperson Rigoberto Tiglao said the election was farthest from her mind.

"We don't even discuss 2004," Tiglao said yesterday at his regular briefing in Malacañang. "This administration is very focused on moving this country forward."

Gonzales said some Lakas members were taking advantage of Ms Macapagal's noncommittal stance. But he conceded that she was in a bind vis a vis her plans for 2004 because she would be open to accusations of politicking.

"Right now, she's between the devil and the deep blue sea," Gonzales said.

'Bulong brigade'

Gonzales said it was disgruntled Lakas members who started the "*bulong* (whisper) brigade" about Ramos running in 2004.

Lozada also expressed to the INQUIRER his belief that party members bearing a grudge against Ms Macapagal were behind the rumors about Ramos' purported plans.

"There are some people *na nagtatampo kay* Gloria and they are taking advantage of that issue," Lozada said without naming names.

Gonzales suggested that Ramos also "tell his people to shut up," specifically Salvador Enriquez, his known ally and former budget secretary.

"Unfortunately, the silence of FVR is being misinterpreted by some quarters," Gonzales said. "If he is really sincere in not running again, he should tell his people to stop all these rumors."

Gonzales conceded that Ramos was not legally barred from seeking another term.

"It's just like a senator who ended his term, got elected in the House and returned to the Senate. The same principle applies," Gonzales said.

But he pointed out that party members should sometimes sacrifice their personal interest for the sake of a united leadership.

"The thing that I am most sorry about is it will split the administration," he said. "At the start I even wanted to run for Speaker, but did not pursue the plan for the sake of consolidating the party."

Gonzales said he would like to give Ramos the benefit of the doubt regarding the latter's statement on not running for office again.

But Lozada thinks Ramos is sincere in what he has been saying. "He just wants to help," Lozada said, adding that the "age factor" was one of the reasons Ramos would no longer seek a new term.

Lozada said Lakas would be solid behind its presidential candidate although "that's not being discussed just yet."

"The proper time will come, but as of now I think it will be Gloria," he said.

What's clear

According to Ramos, what the 1987 Constitution is clear about is that a sitting president cannot seek reelection or a consecutive term in office immediately following his or her six-year term.

"What is clear to me is that reelection is not allowed," he said. "What does reelection mean? It's when you run immediately after your first six-year term."

Ramos also turned on his critics, particularly Sen. Rodolfo Biazon who had said that his body language and statements were belying his denials of planning another run for the presidency.

"I think he is very insecure," Ramos said. "I think I am more physically fit than Senator Biazon."

Ramos, a former Armed Forces chief of staff like Biazón, said it was natural for him to "greet" his fellow veterans and golfers.

He said he would usually give his signature thumbs-up sign, which he extensively used when he was president from 1992-98.

"Of course, I'll greet them with something like 'I just want to shake your hand, I am not campaigning.' Why was it that his (Biazon's) immediate reaction was that I was not asked the question, so why am I answering?" Ramos said.

"That's a sign of insecurity," he said, noting that body language was "very vague."

"What's wrong with those reading body language is that they don't read newspapers and they don't know how to listen to the radio," he added.

Ramos also said having to deny over and over that he would not run for another term was "unfair" to his Ramos Peace and Development Foundation.

"We are a research and humanitarian foundation and not a political institution," he said. He cited its four objectives as Asia-Pacific stability, harmony and peace "starting in the Philippines," sustainable development, democratic governance "including fighting graft and corruption" and economic diplomacy.

Too distant

The presidential election, which is about one-and-a-half years away, is yet too distant to preoccupy Ms Macapagal, Tiglao claimed.

"In politics, one week is too long," he said.

To the question of whether the administration would concede that Sen. Panfilo Lacson was the opposition's strongest prospective candidate, Tiglao said "it has not even crossed the mind of the President to determine who would be the threat and who wouldn't."

"We don't even discuss it," he said.

On the matter of whether Ramos would seek another term, Tiglao said: "It's a non-issue."

The 1987 Constitution provides that a president cannot run "for the same office any time," and this can be understood by "anyone who quite understands English," he said.

"The Constitution is quite clear: there can be no reelection," Tiglao said.

Minority Floor Leader Carlos Padilla said the rumors on Ramos' supposed plans for 2004 were "the problem" of President Macapagal and not of the opposition.

"I think the statement of the President where she called for a political moratorium is actually being directed at FVR because right now the opposition has no presidential candidate yet," Padilla said in a phone interview.

He said the opposition was still "observing" and "trying to identify" its possible presidential candidate for 2004.

He also said that he heard the rumors on Ramos from Lakas congressmen as early as two months ago, and that he was inclined to believe them based on the ex-President's "body language" in a recent TV show.

"While he didn't say yes, he would run again, his body language was saying yes," Padilla said.

'Who cares?'

Gerry Albert Corpuz, spokesperson of the fisherfolk group Pamalakaya, said the Filipino people would surely reject "a zombie trying to resurrect a dead political career."

"He is a psywar veteran, a certified escape artist and master concessionaire rolled into one, but who cares?" Corpuz said.

"Frankly, Eddie, we don't give a damn."

Corpuz said Ramos was a spent political force, having been rejected by the Filipino electorate in the 1998 presidential election when his candidate, then and now Speaker Jose de Venecia, lost to then Vice President Estrada.

According to Corpuz, Ramos and his group merely want political concessions from Ms Macapagal. ***With reports from Christine Avendaño and Gerald G. Lacuarta***

Fortune telling booms

(From page A1)

ing their future from a plate of sushi. Or an electrical appliance. Or sumo underwear.

In Singapore, anxious citizens have been asking a fortune teller to forecast the future of the economy. With the economy on a downturn, fortune telling is booming.

Traditional methods of fortune telling have long been a staple in Japan, where the fate-fretful go to great pains to schedule weddings—and sometimes even elections—on properly auspicious days.

But some new, often whimsical styles are enjoying a boom in popularity on the Internet.

The new creations are usually a mix of popular psychology and broad, vague predictions about what might lie ahead. Judging by how frequently they are creeping into conversations, the nouveau horoscopes have hit a weak spot.

There are good reasons for the Japanese to know what lies ahead. The economy is in recession, unemployment is at a record high, and violent crime is increasing.

But the most popular new kinds of fortune telling are intended more to provide distraction rather than direction.

'Abalone Person'

On one website, visitors are presented with a selection of several types of sushi. You choose five, and the combination is used to interpret your personality and how you should approach your life and relationships.

"You are an Abalone Person!" the site declared in response to one combination. "Abalone people will not be able to avoid trouble early in the year. Impatience is your enemy."

Just how sushi toppings and fate might be intertwined isn't explained.

Other sites instruct visitors to choose from different kinds of animals, bugs or flowers. One uses birth dates to categorize people as electrical appliances, which are said to exemplify attributes such as kindness or diligence.

Another site splits up users into various kinds of underwear, including the kind that sumo wrestlers wear, and predicts how the upcoming day will be. It has had 320,000 hits since June 2000.

Then there's the site that relies on the "Doppelganger Alter Ego" method, a particularly esoteric concept that predicts futures based on supposed body doubles living elsewhere in obscurity.

Over the New Year's holidays, millions of Japanese visit their local Shinto shrines or Buddhist temples to buy good luck charms and slips of paper forecasting their luck for the year ahead.

Bookstore shelves are heavy with calendars offering daily fortunes based on several varieties of Chinese fortune telling, which rival the Western zodiac as the most popular kind of horoscope here.

The perennial best seller is a nearly 300-page book, Jingukan Fortune Calendar," which combines several kinds of astrology with almanac-like notes on phases of the moon, etiquette and even the dos and don'ts of naming babies.

One of the calendar's main attractions, though, is that it predicts the good or bad fortune—in six different classifications—every day of the year.

Singapore

Virkven Sargu's phone has been ringing all afternoon as anxious Singaporeans ask him to forecast when the city-state's recession will end.

But with a vermilion caste mark on his forehead and head-to-toe robes in white, Sargu isn't an economist or a banker—and his predictions aren't limited to the markets.

He's a fortune-teller or, as he likes to put it, an astropalmist.

Business has been booming in recent months, with more and more people seeking his words of wisdom as they struggle with an economic downturn that the government says will leave as many as 25,000 workers out of a job by the end of this year.

"Nowadays in Singapore, so many people are worried about the economy. It was like this when the economy became sick five or so years ago," Sargu said at his office and home in the city's Little India district, stroking a long, white beard that belies his 44 years.

"They're very confused these days and I just try to tell them what to expect," he said, wedging a bit of betel nut wrapped in a leaf into his mouth.

Bad times have been good to Sargu, even if he's a bit hazy on the numbers.

"Sometimes three appointments in an afternoon," he said.

"Sometimes 10 or more appointments."

Trappings of trade

Sargu is not the only fortuneteller in Singapore to see people queuing for more arcane ways of predicting their prospects after fund managers may have failed them.

Demand is stronger in other Asian countries as well.

A recent report by Thai Farmers Research showed Bangkok residents lining up to consult fortunetellers, with nearly 81 percent of those polled saying they have visited one. The average was two readings a year since the Asian financial crisis began in 1997.

"From the beginning of the year, I could have told you that a recession was coming. You didn't have to listen to the government," said George Koh, a Singapore fortuneteller who also specializes in feng shui, a Chinese belief on how to harmonize a person's environment.

Those who didn't heed his predictions are doing so now, paying S$168 ($91.50) a pop to listen to the Malaysian-born 53-year-old detail their futures with a regular pack of cards.

"The number of consultations that I do per week has picked up tremendously," Koh said in his Paramount Astrology office in a half-empty mall.

While revenues from his feng shui business have fallen by some 50 percent because clients simply cannot afford to have their offices and homes correctly aligned, Koh reckons he has been making 20 percent more from fortune telling.

There is an air of prosperity in the dapper Koh's office, especially compared with Sargu's large but spare one.

Koh surrounds himself with a wine rack, comfortable couches and a bookcase filled with feng shui and fortune-telling tomes.

Gold-plated animals of the Chinese zodiac stand on the corner of his desk and on the wall hangs a photo of actress Nastassja Kinski, naked but for a boa constrictor wrapped around her.

Year of water horse

Despite his own gains, Koh was grim about next year's prospects, blaming much of the bad karma knocking around on the events of Sept. 11.

For those wondering whether the economy will recover by the second half of next year, as many economists have predicted, Koh had only bad news.

Using a thick book in Chinese that he called an almanac of sorts, Koh explained first that, according to the lunar calendar, this year is that of the golden snake—not a good time for economic activity.

Next year is the year of the water horse, also not great for doing business. Moreover, it was a blind horse, Koh said, using a detailed logic only those learned in the ways of Chinese astrology could easily follow.

"Now is the time of war. And the horse is a creature of war and fire is the element of war. So if you have a water horse, you are putting out the necessary fire. That's not good," he frowned.

Practical advice

Koh said a number of professionals—lawyers, bankers, engineers and senior managers—had sought his advice to help them through the bad economic times.

"I try to point the way for them," he said. "Often they turn out to have other problems besides their jobs. Sometimes they're alcoholics, so I become more of a personal counselor."

Another advisor is M. Perumal, who runs an Aryuvedic clinic, photocopy shop and astrology business from his office and home in Little India, who tells worried clients to budget a little and gives diet tips when he draws up their astrological charts.

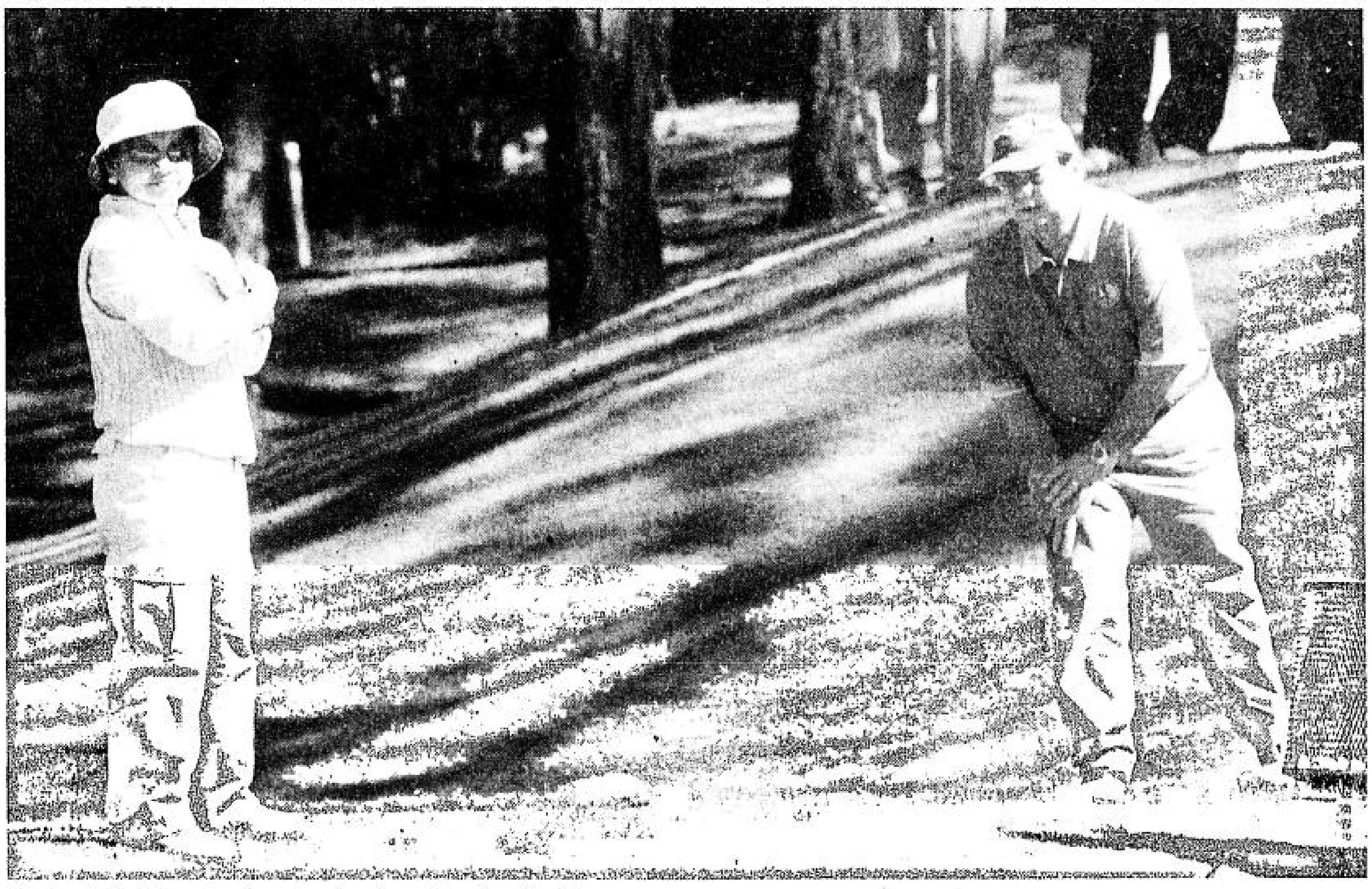
"I tell them there are three important things in life: food, home and clothing. Food is the most important," said the soft-spoken 66-year-old from southern India.

"Home is second and then clothing. Some of these people buy clothes and then throw them away after one, two months. Me, I wear this shirt for two years. I wash it carefully myself."

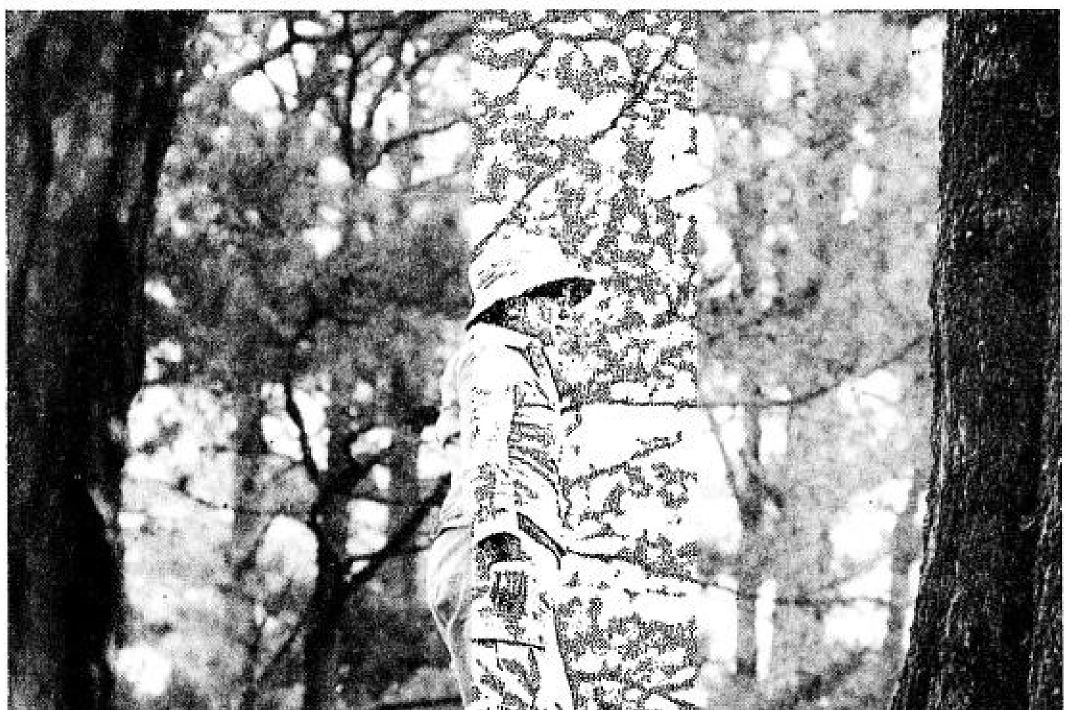
But for Sargu, clients coming in with their financial portfolios and questions about where the economy might be headed have become a bit tiresome, he said.

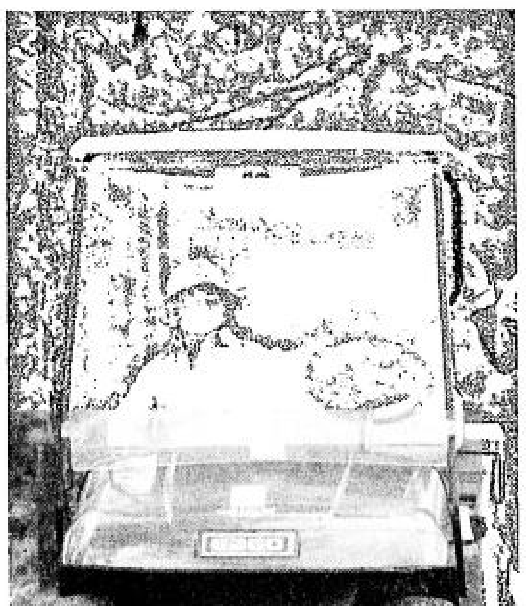
"For this, they do not need to come to an astrologist," he said. ***AP and Reuters***

GMA TAKES FIVE, MIKE, TOO



The family that plays together stays together, at least on the fairways.





RELAXED time for herself.

PHOTOS BY EDWIN BACASMAS

FAR from the madding crowd, and among the sheltering pines of Camp John Hay.

DESPITE TOUGH CHALLENGES

GMA meets economic targets

The Philippine economy is moving forward despite the daunting challenges President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo took on when Filipinos transferred the country's leadership to her in January this year.

In steering the economy, the President implemented a macroeconomic plan to ensure that economic growth is anchored on sound economic fundamentals and that growth would be sustainable.

The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) reported that the gross domestic product (GDP) grew by an average of 2.9 percent in the first three quarters. GDP measures total value of all goods and services produced in the local economy within the year.

The growth forecast for the entire 2001 is 3.3 percent. NEDA is confident this forecast will be achieved.

The growth forecast for next year is a range of 4 to 4.5 percent, a rate that President Macapagal-Arroyo calls modest in normal times.

"But given the global slowdown (and) a 9-11, we would rather err on the side of conservatism rather than wild promise," said the President.

"There is good ground to hope for a better year, but equally compelling reason to try even harder in the year to come."

The economy advanced slowdown in major global economies, particularly the recession in the United States.

The growth for the first three quarters this year compared with that of Indonesia 2.4 per cent; South Korea, 1.8; Thailand, 1.5; Hong Kong, 0.3; Singapore, -0.5; Malaysia, -1.3; and Taiwan, -4.2.

'We can approach the coming year with a reasonable expectation of achieving reasonable growth, maybe even higher growth'
-- Macapagal-Arroyo

The drivers of economic growth were personal consumption and investments. Personal consumption went up by 3.3 percent; investments, by 5.1 percent.

In January this year, the President implemented a macro-economic plan to improve the economic fundamentals on which economic growth was anchored.

The economic fundamentals, according to the President, were important to ensure that growth was to be sustainable.

The plan put together a set of fiscal and monetary policies that support a sound fiscal and debt position, stable prices, healthy balance of payments levels and steady flow of investments for job creation and further economic stimulation.

In implementing the plan, the administration stood by a ceiling on the fiscal deficit, held down inflation and interest rates, and curbed speculation against the peso.

When she took over in January, the economy faced a fiscal deficit that threatened to balloon to P225 billion due to falling government revenues caused by massive leakages from smuggling and out-of-control expenditures.

The President also grappled with borrowings that nearly tripled by 2000.

PRESIDENT Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo presides over a Cabinet meeting at Malacanang. With her are (from left) Public Works and Highways Secretary Simeon Datumanong, Vice President and Foreign Secretary Teofisto Guingona, Jr. and Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo

A crisis of confidence in government also destabilized the exchange rate and caused a decline in investments.

By November the administration had exceeded target collections of the Bureau of Internal Revenue by P400 million in the first 11 months.

The budget deficit as of end-October was ahead of target by P4.4 billion, due to prudent management of the government's debt portfolio.

The inflation rate, at four percent, was at its lowest in the last 16 months. Government addressed the cost to the poor of rice, transportation and medicine.

Inflation was reduced, on the demand side, by responsible fiscal and monetary management. This brought down the cost of money and stamped out speculation against the peso.

The global slowdown lowered export receipts but the peso-dollar rate remained stable. A strong reserve position, a dynamic service sector, large agricultural base, remittances from overseas Filipino workers kept domestic consumption healthy. They also softened the plunge in exports and explained the resilience of the economy.

Foreign direct investments amounted to P132 billion by end-November. This was higher than the projection of P100 billion for the whole 2001. Investments went mostly in telecommunications and manufacturing.

"Given all that," the President said, "I think we can approach the coming year with a reasonable expectation of achieving reasonable growth, maybe even higher growth."

THE PRESIDENT meets with Hong Kong-Shanghai Bank Chairman David Eldon during a luncheon meeting with the Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce at the Island Shangri-La Hotel during her visit to the HK Special Administrative Region in October this year.

Inflation rate falls under GMA's watch

Low inflation rates spurs consumer spending, triggers more economic activities and attracts more investment activities, thus strengthening GMA efforts to free millions of Filipinos from the yoke of poverty

A strong performance by the country's agriculture sector and softening international oil prices, coupled with prudent fiscal and monetary policies kept prices of basic products low and stable in the entire year.

As of November, the inflation rate averaged 6.3 percent, which is at the low end of the 6-7 percent target set by the President's economic team at the start of her presidency in January.

The government's successful effort to keep prices of basic goods down boosts the President Macapagal-Arroyo's campaign to win the fight against poverty in the Philippines within the decade.

Mrs. Arroyo's full focus on the economy produced in a 3.7 percent growth in the gross national product, an exceptional achievement considering the global economic slowdown that has stalled growth in many nations.

Low inflation rates boosts consumer spending which triggers more economic activities and attracted more investment activities, strengthening the President's efforts to free millions of Filipinos from the yoke of poverty that has gripped them for decades.

"Given all that, I think we can approach the coming year with a reasonable expectation of achieving reasonable growth, maybe even higher growth," the President told media people during a yearend economic briefing at the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas last week.

The country's economic managers attributed the low inflation rate to generally favorable weather conditions during the year that contributed to strong agricultural performance, thus ensuring adequate food supply, and lower oil prices due to the improved world supply situation and lower demand.

Food and oil are among major factors that influence the inflation rate, which is measured through the prices of a basket of goods and services.

The improved agricultural performance and low oil prices, together with a stable peso and well-managed domestic liquidity levels due to the prudent fiscal management policies contributed to the low inflation rate.

The favorable inflation environment in 2001 created the room for the BSP to use monetary policy as a means of providing broad support to the country's growth objectives.

Since December 2000, the BSP has cut its policy interest rates by a total of 725 basis points, bringing these rates to their lowest levels since September 1995.

This in turn, resulted in lower interest rates, another key factor in encouraging investments and other economic activities.

Philippine economy top performer in Asia

DANTE CANLAS

Despite a global economic slowdown that has affected its exports, the Philippines enjoyed the highest gross domestic product (GDP) growth in Asia during the first nine months of 2001, according to the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA).

The NEDA reported that the industry that fuelled economic growth is the services sector, particularly the information and communications technology (ICT) industry that the administration is promoting as a star economic performer.

Bucking the global economic slowdown, the Philippines' economy is expected to post a growth rate of 3.7 percent in the entire year, making the Philippines an exception among Asian and world economies that are either slowing down or posting negative growths.

In its yearend report, the NEDA said that four economies in the region, formerly dubbed as the "economic tigers of Asia," have actually registered negative growths.

For the first three quarters of 2001, the Philippines registered an average 2.9 percent GDP growth.

According to the NEDA, during the first three quarters, the services sector had the biggest contribution to the GDP growth growing by 4.0 percent. Agriculture followed with a 2.9 percent growth. The industry sector grew by 2.1 percent.

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas, said the GDP growth was mainly fueled by personal consumption, which grew by 3.3 percent, and investments, which grew by 5.1 percent.

Canlas said that due to factors that continue to support domestic demands, the government is confident that it can achieve its GDP growth forecast of 3.3 percent for 2001.

GMA's 'Dream Team' helps her put economy in order

Executives of multinational companies and international businesses have expressed envy over President Macapagal-Arroyo's having a deep economic bench in her Cabinet.

She has a "Dream Team" Cabinet, they said, with seven graduates from Harvard and two graduates from the Wharton School of Economics.

Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, for instance, inhibited himself from making recommendations on the Kirin-San Miguel deal because he was once an international banker who had negotiated for the Kirin buy-in.

Despite the fact that the Kirin - San Miguel talks did not prosper during Camacho's time, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo pulled out the DOF secretary from the task of putting Kirin and the Presidential Commission on Good Government together.

"For a successful international banker like (Secretary Camacho), who is not a client," the President said. "But, nonetheless, just not to expose him or to jeopardize anything that will come out, I am hereby transferring that function to another Wall Street banker, Mar Roxas."

The President noted that the economic team is so homogeneous one can substitute for the other.

American businessmen took note of this attribute during their meeting with the Filipino economic ministers in Shanghai in October.

The Philippine economic managers were with the President during the ninth Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in Shanghai.

When Secretary Roxas thought he would get stuck in a meeting of the World Trade Organization in Doha, Secretary Camacho and Energy Secretary Vince Perez were prepared to make the presentations during business conferences during the President's visit in the United States last month.

The Harvard graduates are Secretary Camacho, Labor Secretary Patricia Sto. Tomas, Presidential Spokesman Rigoberto Tiglao, Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman, Environment Secretary Heherson Alvarez and Presidential Chief of Staff Renato Corona.

From Wharton come Energy Minister Vincent Perez and Secretary Roxas.

ADVT.

Wounded deer waits for Santa

(From page A1)

deer grazing by the roadside. We immediately turned back to investigate. To our dismay, we discovered that the deer had a gaping wound on its left foreleg, probably a result of a trap it had stepped on.

Aphrodisiac

Its right antler was chopped off. When we asked the people living in the area about the deer, they replied that it would be sold as a delicacy. Its antlers would serve as aphrodisiac.

A certain Aling Luisa, who owned a store just across from where the deer stood, offered the buck to us for P7,000. She noted that a week before, another deer was sold for P8,500.

We offered P3,500 for the animal. Aling Luisa refused. She said the deer's owner explicitly instructed her to sell the animal for P7,000.

We then implored her to hand the deer over to us so we could give it to officials at the Central Luzon State University (CLSU) in Muñoz, Nueva Ecija, where its wounds could be treated.

At this point we introduced ourselves and told her it was against the law to hunt endangered animals. She remained stubborn, insisting that we wait for the owner.

Half a kilometer ahead from where we were conducting negotiations was a Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) detachment. When our group talked to Romy Sevilla, assistant head of DENR deputized agents at the detachment, he said his group was limited to giving advisories to people in the area not to hunt endangered animals. The agents' focus, he said, was illegal logging. He asked us to seek the help of the DENR office at the CLSU.

We were back to square one.

Sevilla then warned us of dealing with strangers in the area. They could be members of the New People's Army, he said.

We asked him how he could go about his duties as a DENR agent if he feared the NPA. Sevilla said he was just careful not to earn their ire.

We begged him to go with us to Aling Luisa to convince her to hand over the deer to us. Sevilla asked one of his agents, Wilfred Barabasa, to accompany us instead.

Pet

Still, our efforts were fruitless. As we went back to the DENR detachment, the purported owner of the deer arrived. Rogel Aquino said the deer was his pet. He denied he was selling it.

"*Katabi ko pa yan pag tulog. Nagpunta na rin ako sa veterinarian at ako'y pinayuhan na gamutin ang sugat ng Amoxicillin* (I even sleep beside the deer. I was advised by a veterinarian to treat the wounds with Amoxicillin)," Aquino said.

He also told us that hunting wild deer and boar (*baboy damo*) was a way of life of the Bugkalots, the natives of the area.

Sensing that our negotiations had come to a dead end, we told Aquino that we would be back soon to check on the deer. We told him to consider our offer to buy the deer so it could be given proper care at the CLSU.

The CLSU has an enclosure for deer and other indigenous animals. In a phone interview with CLSU president Dr. Rodolfo Undan early this week, he said that the university would accept the deer.

"Our male deer just died recently. We don't have a male deer anymore," he said.

The CLSU does not hunt deer for captivity, but accepts them from people who turn them over to the university, according to Undan.

"We want to be a biodiversity campus. Preserving indigenous species is part of our institution's concerns," he said.

In September last year, the INQUIRER reported that several animal species in the Sierra Madre natural park in Cagayan Valley had been included in the endangered list of the DENR. These were the Philippine brown deer (*Cervus marianus*), wild boar (*Alingo susphilippinesis*), *pawikan* or sea turtle (*Chelonia mytas*), bayakan or native bat, Philippine Eagle (*Pithecophaga jefferyi*), cloud rat (*Ratus mindorensis)* and the flame-breasted fruit dove.

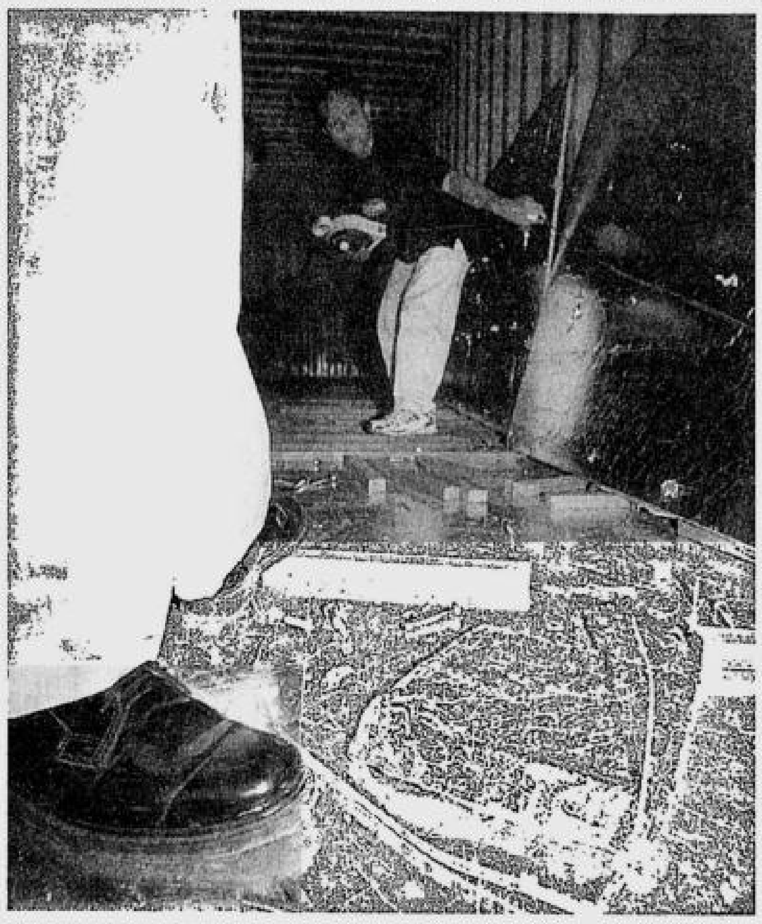
The National Geographic website reports that in Mindanao, the Philippine deer, along with the Philippine warty pig, suffer from intense hunting and habitat loss.

Last year, a survey by the Conservation of Priority Protected Areas in Malaybalay City reported that poverty had pushed the locals of Mt. Kitanglad in Bukidnon to hunt threatened wildlife species for food or for additional income. As a result, the number of deer and wild pigs in Mt. Kitanglad has dwindled.

As for the young deer, we failed to get it the first time. We plan to visit the deer on our next trip to Sagada in January. We hope that it's still in one piece. Its "family" is waiting in Muñoz.

THE WAREHOUSE near Malacañang along the Quirino Highway in Pandacan, Manila, where the PNP NarGroup allegedly found shabu and 350 boxes of vermicelli noodles from China used as "props." ***(Story on Page A21.)***

PHOTOS BY ERIK ARAZAS



SACHETS made of aluminum foil allegedly contained shabu, according to the police raiders.

CANINES sniff out the drugs at the warehouse allegedly used by members of the Hong Kong Triad to stock large shipments of shabu.

Playing with fire child's play

(From page A1)

job. Nelson also visited with adults who have been at it for the past 20 years.

"I've been doing this for the past 20 years. When I was still young, I could only finish 1,000 pieces. Now after years of practice, I can finish 5,000 pieces. Not bad," said Rosa Valenzuela.

She said she does not mind the risks because, "I would die anyway with an empty stomach so I might as well die with a full stomach."

Valenzuela said she earns P25 for every 1,000 pieces of "*triangulo*" she makes. From sunrise to sundown, she said, she can finish at least 5,000 pieces and bring home P125.

Valenzuela immediately warned photographers not to use their flash when taking pictures inside her makeshift tent. "The gunpowder is so sensitive we could all be blown up in seconds," she warned the Manila-based photographers.

Commitment

The US official said the US government has committed to help the Philippine government eliminate child labor.

To attain this goal, however, Nelson said the US and the Philippine governments should eradicate the root cause of the problem, poverty.

"The US government has lined up several programs to assist the Philippine government in achieving the eradication of hazardous child labor all over the country," he said.

These programs include providing funding for livelihood projects, health and education programs, he said.

Andrew de Guzman, president of the Bocaue Thunder Jaycees who accompanied Nelson, said at least three persons died and two others were seriously wounded after firecrackers exploded in a makeshift tent last Dec. 1.

De Guzman said the people in Bocaue had no alternative livelihood after the harvest season that they are forced to work in the traditional backyard industry that Bocaue has been known for, the manufacturing of pyrotechnics.

De Guzman said that door mat making has been introduced to housewives. Also the "bigasang bayan" where the women can earn money through their collective effort.

Emily Cuevas, 30, who shares the makeshift tent with Valenzuela, said they started making firecrackers in November. They used to do the laundry for other people.

"But the laundry comes only twice a week so we had nothing to do the rest of the week," Cuevas said.

Eleven-year-old Jomel Gerez said he was in Grade 5 and the P30 he earns from making firecrackers helps him to continue his schooling.

Asked if he did not want to play instead of making firecrackers, Gerez said: "It is like I am playing. I measure the sand I need, hammer it inside a small box, pass it on to the next person who would put the wicks and so on."

His parents, he said, were doing the same thing.

After the holidays, Gerez said, he will go back to school and that he will have "all the time in the world to play."

GMA names . . .

(From page A1)

petency standards" but also conduct "lifestyle checks on prospective appointees to public office."

In Memorandum Order No. 49, the President authorized Sanchez to call Cabinet secretaries and heads of all government offices to ensure compliance.

She reasoned that the "efficient management of information" was "vital to the public dissemination of government initiatives and the delivery of basic services."

"Toward this end," she said "the government should speak in one voice."

The memo was distributed yesterday to Malacañang reporters, some of whom wondered why the job was given to Sanchez, a former congressman from Rizal who had been accused of dual citizenship, and not to Press Secretary Noel Cabrera, who was once a newspaper editor.

Cabrera and Sanchez could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Even Rigoberto Tiglao, spokesperson for the President, was not sure why the responsibility went to Sanchez.

"Well, maybe because Mr. Sanchez was seen as having not enough (of a) workload," Tiglao said.

There are two other press undersecretaries—former reporter Bobby Capco (for operations) and Carmen Suva (for media relations).

Under glass

Regarding the order to put appointees to public office under glass, Malacañang said the Civil Service Commission had been "tasked to come up with guidelines for the implementation of this measure not later than end of February 2002."

But the Palace statement was not clear on whether the units to be set up would be empowered to draw the line on transgressing appointees.

It also did not say how appointees of the President, especially members of the Cabinet, would be covered by the measure.

Malacañang said the measure was among those approved during the recent National Socio-Economic Summit, which passed, among others, an "action agenda on good governance of the Macapagal-Arroyo administration for the next six months."

The measure aims to "raise the moral standards of government and society," according to the Palace.

It said the President had ordered the "unlocking (of) hundreds of bottlenecks in government transactions or projects that get in the way of enterprise and effective governance in all sectors."

"These bottlenecks often result in irregularities and anomalies," Malacañang quoted the President as saying.

Operative word

Tiglao was unable to satisfy reporters seeking to understand Memorandum Order No. 49.

While the memo said all government press releases would have to go through Sanchez first, Tiglao insisted that the undersecretary would "only coordinate."

"The operative word here is 'coordination,'" he said, ignoring a reporter's remark that the order virtually created an information "clearinghouse."

Tiglao said Sanchez's task was to "improve the information dissemination."

Told that the added layer of bureaucracy would only hamper the release of press statements, he said: "We hope it will facilitate (it)."

Tiglao is not concerned that the memo also covers him. "I speak for the President," he pointed out.

He denied that there was a specific incident that prompted the President to order her Cabinet officials to "speak in one voice."

AN APOLOGY
TO ALL MUSLIM BROTHERS AND SISTERS

We sincerely apologize to all our Muslim brothers and sisters for having printed an erroneous caption in the Mercury Drug 2002 Calendar cover which read:

"Islam Church where they worship Mohammed"

The correct caption should have read:

"A Muslim mosque (house of prayer) where they worship ALLAH".

We deeply regret this inadvertent error. And we request all persons who might have received copies of the calendar to please return them to any Mercury Drug store.

mercury drug

TO ALL MUSLIM BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Assalamu Alaikum

We would like to inform all Muslims that the Management of Mercury Drug Corporation has personally sought the advice of the Darul Iftah on how to make their apology to all the Muslims and how to rectify their error.

Let it be known to everyone that the foremost teaching of Islam is "There is No God but ALLAH and Mohammed is the messenger of God." Muslims do not worship Mohammed but ALLAH alone.

We are pleased that Mercury Drug has volunteered to extend their apology in the manner that we have deemed best. We wholeheartedly accept their apology. We therefore call on all our brothers and sisters in Islam to please observe calmness and refrain from taking any irresponsible action.

SGD.

DARUL IFTAH
Zamboanga City, Philippines
December 22, 2001

Illbruck paces Hobart race

SYDNEY, Australia—German yacht Illbruck had a two-mile lead in the Sydney to Hobart race on Thursday while News Corp, its rival in the Volvo around-the-world event, had moved into second. With just over 24 hours since 75 starters left Sydney Harbor, Illbruck and News Corp had entered Bass Strait along with the other leaders. *AP*

SPORTS

AL S. MENDOZA, Editor **EDWIN M. VILLANUEVA**, Assistant Editor

SPORTS ON TV

COMPILED BY LORENZO MANGUIAT

BASKETBALL: NBA Action at 8 a.m. (r – 8:30 p.m.) on ESPN
NBA—Miami Heat vs Atlanta Hawks at 8:30 a.m. (r – 9 p.m.) on ESPN
GOLF: US Open Official Films—1994 at 6 p.m. on ESPN
PGA—he Players Championship, Final Round at 11:30 p.m. on Star Sports
TENNIS: Best of Wimbledon 2001 at 9:30 p.m. on Star Sports
BILLIARDS: 2001 Wheel Chair Billiards at 4 p.m. (r) on ESPN

PATRIMONIO AS CONSULTANT

Purefoods: ₱30M for Seigle

BY JUNE NAVARRO

ANDY Seigle is likely to stay with Purefoods for the next five years with a juicy P30 million plus contract.

Team manager Rene Pardo bared this yesterday, saying that the 6-foot-8 Andy Seigle had brought his contract along with him to the United States.

"The only thing lacking is Andy's signature. There were no additions since the figures in the contract already met the maximum salary allowed by the league," said Pardo.

He added Seigle would receive P.5 million a month, the maximum salary allowed by the PBA for five seasons, which translates to P30 million plus other perks such as won-game incentives and placement bonuses.

Pardo also said Alvin Patrimonio, the PBA's Ironman and four-time MVP, is close to signing a three-year pact which includes his involvement as a team consultant for Purefoods.

According to Pardo, the ballclub's top management composed of San Miguel Corporation bigwigs already approved in principle the provisions stipulated in Patrimonio's contract.

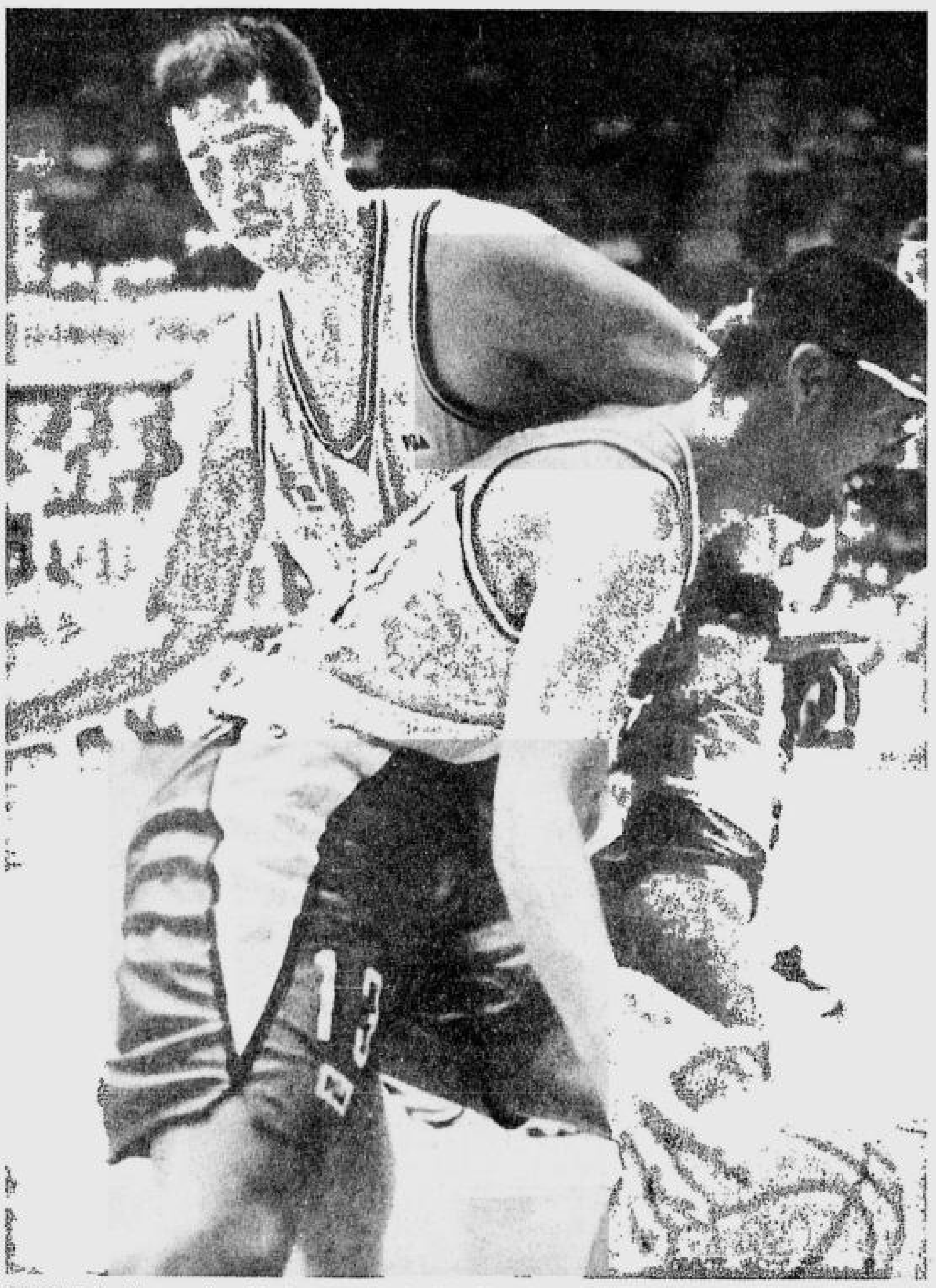
Although he failed to reveal the exact figures in the offer sheet, Pardo said Patrimonio would still receive the maximum salary allowed in the first year of the pact.

Pardo said Patrimonio, who played 500 consecutive games before the Hotdogs got eliminated in the season-ending Governors Cup, expressed satisfaction with the contract and would definitely sign it after the Yuletide season.

Patrimonio is spending the holidays in Baguio City with his family and couldn't be reached for comment.

He was the beneficiary of one of the most lucrative deals in the league, inking a 5-year contract with Purefoods in 1991 worth P25.3 million, a figure earlier dangled by Pepsi but matched by the Hotdogs.

In 1996, Patrimonio signed a P30-million, 5-year deal with the Hotdogs that justified the five championship rings he had won for the ballclub since 1989.



SEIGLE (left) guarding Marlou Aquino in this file photo.

Int'l derby Jan. 8

THE THIRD edition of Mandaluyong Coliseum's biggest crowd-drawer, the "Mandaluyong 9-Cock International Derby," is all set on Jan. 8, 10 and 12.

Sponsors are Sagupaan Super Feeds and Washout Shampoo.

The three-day cockfest hosted by businessman-sportsman Vic Yu, with the full backing of the United Cockers Association of the Philippines (Ucap,) bagged the second edition in 2000.

More than 75 local and international pit stars are expected to take part in what is billed as the biggest firestarter of 2002's cockfighting scene.

Meanwhile, engineer Sonny Lagon and Pol Estrellado will host the "3rd Ucap 7-Cock Derby" on Jan. 15 and 17.

For other inquiries, call 534-4110, 535-2341, 531-4003 and 531-4005.

Pasay 4-cock tonight

COCKERS from Laguna, Batangas, Cavite, Rizal, Bulacan and Metro Manila collide in another big-time 4-cock derby at 7 tonight at the Pasay City cockpit.

At stake is a whopping cash prize of P300,000, according to derby host Bobby Cabillon of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, who recently earned the tag as "giant killer" for ruling several big-time derbies.

The event is actually a fitting follow-up to the highly successful "Pasko Na Sa Pasay 4-Cock Derby" hosted by pit manager Eric dela Rosa last week, wherein 80 entries (160 fights) took part.

Submission of weights is today, from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. and interested parties may contact 816-6750, 843-1890 and 843-1746.

Meanwhile, an average of 65 fights per day are held at PCC during regular hackfights every Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

Montoya voted top athlete

BOGOTA, Colombia—Colombia's media has crowned Formula One race car rookie Juan Pablo Montoya athlete of the year in this South American country.

The main daily newspaper, El Tiempo, gave out its yearly honor Sunday to the 26-year-old who was Formula One's rookie of the year and sixth place finisher in the circuit's 2001 individual standings.

"His story is just beginning," the paper predicted of Bogota native Montoya. *AP*

BLAST FROM THE PAST

TODAY in 1990, NM Chito Garma, earning eight points, drew with NM Petronio Roca to win the Nutrimix RP Open chess championship in Quezon City. Also today in 1995, Juvic Pagunsan fired a four-over-par 75 to post a three-stroke victory over Jong Laput and Angelo Que in the Annual Jungolf Anniversary tournament at the west course of Wack Wack Golf and Country Club.

Ritualo, Tolomia join PBA drafting

BIG names from the Philippine Basketball League and the Metropolitan Basketball Association suddenly cropped up in the list of applicants for the 2002 PBA Annual Draft.

Renren Ritualo of Welcoat Paints and Cris Calaguio of the now-disbanded San Juan Knights were the early birds yesterday at the PBA offices in Pasig City.

They will join 29 other hopefuls that include Chester Tolomia of Shark Energy Drinks, Rafi Reavis and Kalani Ferreria of San Juan, Laguna's Sunny Margate and Richard Melencio, Ateneo-Pioneer's Miguel Noble and Dexter Racho and Rency Bajar of Dazz Dishwashing.

Ritualo, who made waves in the UAAP and the PBL, said he wasn't expecting to come out on top but was quite certain of making it in one of the teams in the PBA.

Draft day will be on Jan. 13 at the Glorietta Activity Center in Makati City.

More prized cagers are expected to beat today's deadline as Rommel Adducul of the Batangas Blades and John Ferriols of the Negros Slashers already expressed their intent to join the PBA.

A slew of unknown Fil-foreigners also came up in the list. They are Francis Rauschmayer from Florida, Leodito Yanogacio Jr. from New Jersey, Tom Arceno and Richard Dela Pena.

These aspirants are requested to present their Department of Justice confirmation documents on or before Jan. 8 or face disqualification.

Local-born players, however, must satisfy any of the following requirements: at least 23 years old, a high school graduate at the end of the 1998 school year or a college degree holder.

Should Federal Express get the approval of the league's Board of Governors, it would lay claim on the top pick originally won by Tanduay in the lottery.

The PBA Board deferred its decision on FedEx's status until Jan. 3.

De Guzman enters Final 4

IAN de Guzman and Jandrick de Castro downed separate rivals yesterday to reach the boys' 18-under semifinals in the 2001 Milo Junior Tennis Cup and Regional Workshop at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

De Guzman, champion in the Manzano Memorial Cup last week, outplayed Borgs Solpico, 6-4, 6-4.

De Castro, a high school freshman at La Salle-Greenhills, defeated Janji Soquino, 6-1, 6-4 to arrange a Final Four duel with Yannick Guba, a 6-2, 6-1 winner over Irwin de Guzman.

Earlier, Arithmetico Lim clobbered Christian Canlas, 6-2, 6-2 and Ed Angelo Diez outclassed Hussein Macapendeg, 6-0, 6-1, to forge a boys' 14-under semifinal showdown in this event organized by the Children's Tennis Workshop and supported by Adidas and Sports Kids.

In other matches, Hamza Macapendeg defeated Daniel Macalino, 6-2, 6-0, to advance against Bryan Deo Dayleg, who beat Gerber Mamawal, 6-3, 6-3.

In the girls' 16-under division, Bernardine Sepulveda downed Angelica Ngo, 6-1, 6-1 to advance in the semifinal round against German Angela Wolff, who survived Melissa Orteza, 6-2, 2-6, 7-5. Other winners were Ivy de Castro and Julie Base.

Semifinalists in the girls' 12-under class were Bambi Zoleta, Julie Ann Jopia, Julie Em Botor and Jessica Agra.

Gaining semifinal slots in the unisex 10-under were Bambi Zoleta, who conquered Sarah Jane Lim, 6-3, 6-3; Gerard Ngo, who struggled past Bernardine Siso, 6-4, 7-6; Patrick Ken Arevalo, who blasted Joseph Baldonado, 6-0, 6-0; and Jessica Agra, a 6-4, 6-4 winner over Tomic Apacible.

2001 PBA heroes tonight

VIVA Vintage Sports looks back at the champions and heroes of the 2001 PBA season in tonight's "PBA Year in Review" show from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. on IBC-13.

From the historic first championships of Red Bull Thunder and Sta. Lucia Realty to the continued dominance of the powerhouse San Miguel Beer and crowd-pleasing exploits of Barangay Ginebra, the year-end show will feature the greatest and most memorable moments of the season just concluded.

It will showcase the most scintillating performances of the leagues' superstars like MVP Danny Ildefonso, Danny Seigle, Kenneth Duremdes and Dennis Espino as well as the emergence of new, exciting young talents in the PBA like Mark Caguioa and Gerard Francisco.

Jose names Davis Cup members

NATIONAL coach Johnny Jose yesterday bared the members of the team that will compete in the Asia-Oceania Group 2 Davis Cup tie in Kazakhstan next year.

Carrying the national colors in the Davis Cup tie slated Feb. 8-10 at the Baganashyl Sports Complex in Almaty City are Adelo Abadia, Johnny Arcilla, Michael Mora III and Joseph Victorino.

Rolando Ruel Jr., a member of this year's squad, was named alternate.

Jose said the players will undergo rigid training in Baguio City starting Jan. 7. Former player and now assistant coach Cris Cuarto will serve as Jose's assistant.

Jose chose Baguio as training venue to allow the players to adjust with the expected cold weather in Kazakhstan during the competition.

"Our players have to acclimatize, which is very important as their performances may be affected by the weather condition in Kazakhstan," said Jose, a former Asian Games gold medalist.

What's with these people at the PNCC?

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

THE ROADSIGNS are easy to understand because they are written in simple English and Pilipino, yet the traffic rule on "slow-moving vehicles (such as trucks and buses) to keep to the right lane" is being ignored every day. Why?

As a regular motorist plying the North Luzon Tollway I have observed this rampant violation every time I take the NLT. Worse, this has been happening right under the very noses of many roving patrol cars of the Philippine National Construction Corp. which are supposed to apprehend tollway violators. Are these PNCC patrol cars (and towing vehicles) only good and efficient in apprehending stalled vehicles along the expressway?

Also, may I remind Mr. Luis F. Sison, PNCC chair and CEO, that he could be of better service to the motoring public, the taxpayers who are paying for their upkeep, by admonishing some of his abusive, ill-mannered and arrogant men.

A few nights ago on his way home to Bulacan, a friend and *kababayan* narrated to me his sad experience during an argument with two PNCC personnel at the Balintawak toll exit. In the heat of their discussion, my friend, sensing serious trouble ahead, decided not to argue any further because, aside from being smaller and older, the two PNCC bullies had the ultimate weapon: guns on their holsters. Wary that many gun holders have this propensity to shoot first and regret later, my friend prudently decided not to plead his case any longer. He did not even report the matter to the authorities since he was unable to get the names of the arrogant PNCC people who were wearing jackets at that time which covered their name tags and making it impossible for him to identify them. Besides, they vehemently refused to give their names, saying menacingly that they would only do so if my friend would hand them his driver's license first. Naturally, my friend did not give them his license, knowing pretty well that he had not committed any violation.

'Tahimik lang'

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

A SAN Miguel Beer top official called me up yesterday to say it was Ron Jacobs himself who did not want his stroke divulged to media.

"We respected his wish, the reason why we kept silent over the stroke that hit him on Sunday," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

I did not reason out with him. Useless. He was pleading his case. No use telling him SMB should come out with an official medical bulletin to inform the public of Ron's true condition. Sort of a progress report because the public ought to know the real score on their national coach's medical condition.

"If you don't mind, let me just tell you what his doctors told us," he said. "They said the signs are very positive for Ron's speedy recovery. That Ron's athleticism has sheltered him from suffering a life-threatening stroke."

He did not say whether Ron suffered a major stroke or not.

"The doctors said '*magugulat daw tayo sa* capacity *niya* to recover fast,'" he said.

The SMB official said the 59-year-old Jacobs did not want to inconvenience his US-based mother "with ugly reports about his condition. *Gusto niya tahimik lang.*"

He said Jacobs remains confined at the St. Luke's ICU (intensive care unit) "because doctors wanted to make sure everything was all right for Ron. They didn't want to take any chances."

He praised Ron for "his dedication to his coaching job."

Since Ron was named coach of the Asiad-bound quintet, the SMB official said, "Jacobs would wake up at 3 a.m. and start mapping out strategies for his boys."

I've heard so much about Ron's work routine. He is a workaholic. So that even as he is a health-conscious buff, subsisting mainly on greens and almost a no-meat diet (he jogs at 2 p.m. from Monday to Saturday), the stroke that struck him could be attributed to stress and tension.

Someone close to him told me, "So consumed was Ron by his new job that he has forgotten how to relax."

■

Fellow Beatlemaniac Allan Magturo of Quezon City wrote to say DZRJ FM 100.3 will air Beatle music non-stop for 39 hours from Dec. 31 at 10 a.m. up to 1 a.m. of Jan. 2, 2002. He said that DZRJ, founded 39 years ago, was the first station to play the Beatles in Philippine radio.

Ye! Ye! Ye!

SPORTSWATCH

Hornets stop Wizards

JORDAN

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina—Michael Jordan scored 28 points, not enough offense to cover Richard Hamilton's absence, as Charlotte snapped Washington's nine-game NBA winning streak, 99-93. Hamilton, Washington's second-leading scorer at 19.8 points a game, was placed on the injured list before the game with a groin injury. Without him, the Wizards had to rely on Jordan and backup guard Tyrone Lue for scoring. Jordan couldn't deliver, shooting just 11-for-28 and missing four straight shots midway through the fourth quarter when the Hornets padded their lead. After hitting a late 3-pointer to cut the deficit to four, the ball slipped out of Jordan's hands under Charlotte's basket after the Hornets double-teamed him. Elden Campbell led Charlotte with 17 points and 13 rebounds, and Baron Davis had 15 points.

NBA RESULTS

New Jersey 91, Cleveland 89; Memphis 107, Chicago 85; Milwaukee 107, Atlanta 97; Dallas 126, San Antonio 123, OT; Indiana 89, Orlando 82; Charlotte 99, Washington 93; Phoenix 97, Houston 91; Utah 99, Boston 86; Minnesota 94, Denver 91; Sacramento 89, Portland 74; Golden State 101, L.A. Lakers 90; Philadelphia 100, L.A. Clippers 86. *AP*

Issel resigns as coach

DENVER—Dan Issel has accepted a buyout and resigned as head coach and president of the Denver Nuggets, two weeks after he was suspended for making an insensitive ethnic remark to a fan. The Wednesday announcement came after Issel and general manager Kiki Vandeweghe finalized the details of Issel's departure in private meetings. "I think that he really believed that after a lot of soul searching, that perhaps coaching wasn't for him," Vandeweghe said at a news conference. "Dan kind of came to terms with some things in his own life. And really, you know, as long as I've known Dan, he's always done, really, what's best for the organization," he said. *AP*

RACING TIPS

AT SANTA ANA BY MR. 999

Race 1—1. Gypsy Soul 2. Haz It All 3. Secret 4. Lucky Strike
Race 2—1. Ohayo Gozaimas 2. Pride of Mandaue 3. Bagoba
Race 3—1. Turbo Carera 2. Mighty Dragon 3. Friendly Lover 4. Rising Fast
Race 4—1. Dynamite Miss 2. Hacker 3. Project Genesis
Race 5—1. El Condor 2. Dynasty 3. College Gem 4. En Carta/Real Charm
Race 6—1. Romario/Always 2. College Gem 3. Jinky 4. Hezagonebabes
Race 7—1. Terrific 2. Conquer D Sun
Race 8—1. Rosewood 2. Precious Stone 3. Arriba King 4. Bullish View 5. Dangerous Beauty
Race 9—1. Gidget 2. Scholar Tem 3. Baptism of Fire
Race 10—1. Noble Principality 2. Cool Under Fire 3. Winning Prize 4. Cobra Door
Race 11—1. Precious Moment 2. Uzisaki 3. Ahoy There 4. Guts 5. Rose In Bloom
Race 12—1. Silver Eagle 2. Earth Angel 3. Michael's Way
Race 13—1. You and Me 2. Snake Dancer 3. Early Warning 4. Shuttle's Magic 5. Zip On 6. Impeccable

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METRO

LOUIE C. CAMINO, Editor

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Police chief escapes ambush attempt

ARMED men on board a car yesterday shot at a police car, which Parañaque police chief Supt. Ruben Catabona had just alighted from, outside the Multinational Village. But a certain SPO3 Tanagan died from several gunshot wounds in the body, Catabona said. Prior to the incident, Catabona said he asked Tanagan to drive him to SM shopping mall in Sucat for a routine police inspection. He said he then instructed Tanagan to patrol the Multinational Village. *Christian V. Esguerra*

Malacañang warehouse raided for shabu

BY TJ BURGONIO

ANTI-NARCOTICS agents yesterday raided a large shabu warehouse near Malacañang in Manila, but found only a small amount of shabu and hundreds of boxes of sotanghon (vermicelli noodles) from China.

Members of the Philippine National Police-Narcotics Group (NarcGroup) found residues of shabu, weighing more than a kilo, and assorted shabu paraphernalia inside a room at the warehouse at 2009 Quirino Ave. in Paco, Manila, some 200 meters away from Malacañang Park. They also found about 350 boxes of sotanghon produced in Shandong province during a search inside the warehouse where an empty container van and a payloader were also found. Alleged members of the Hong Kong Triad engaged in drug peddling were said to have been using the warehouse to stock large shipments of shabu from Fujian, China before these are distributed in Metro Manila and in Regions 3, 4 and 5, said Supt. Nelson Yabut of NarcGroup.

Director Efren Fernandez, NarcGroup chief, said the syndicate apparently used the boxes of sotanghon as "props" for their illicit drug trafficking operations in the country. He said the syndicate ships vans filled with sotanghon boxes to Manila via the South Harbor in Manila, and conceals packs of shabu inside a 2-inch thick secret compartment on the van's floor.

NarcGroup agents unhinged nails of the container van's plywood floor to reveal a secret compartment, but they did not find any shabu inside.

Interior Secretary Joey Lina and PNP chief Director General Leandro Mendoza hailed the raid, saying this was a major breakthrough in the fight against the booming illicit drug trade. The raid was a follow-up operation of the seizure of 57 kilos of shabu worth P114 million from six Chinese during a series of operations last week in Pasay and Manila.

The Chinese were believed to be members of the Hong Kong Triad, policed said, citing that their calls were traced to Hong Kong.

One of those arrested disclosed the location of the warehouse during investigation. Police then secured the area while they applied for a search warrant from the Manila regional trial court. The search warrant was issued only yesterday.

NarcGroup also secured a warrant to search the office of Brokerage 2001 in Binondo, which allegedly facilitated the group's shipment with the customs personnel in the South Harbor.

Korina's lawyer says maid's counsel sensationalizing case

BY ALCUIN PAPA AND CHRISTIAN V. ESGUERRA

THE LAWYER of newsreader and radio talk show host Korina Sanchez yesterday berated the lawyer of maid Bernadita Inocencio for allegedly prompting his client into hurling more accusations against Sanchez to sensationalize the issue.

Both Sanchez and Inocencio filed charges against each other in separate courts yesterday.

Sanchez's lawyer Salvador Panelo criticized Inocencio's legal counsel, Mel "Batas" Mauricio, a broadcaster of GMA-7, rival network of ABS-CBN where Sanchez belongs, for being a "publicity-seeker who would jump at any opportunity to be in the limelight."

In a telephone interview yesterday with the INQUIRER, Panelo said: "*Pinapalaki niya ang sunog* (he is aggravating the situation). If I were him, I would just advise my client to settle the issue amicably since it would not go anywhere."

He said Inocencio and her lawyer should not "sensationalize" the issue by threatening to file more charges against Sanchez, on top of the physical abuse complaint.

"*Kawawa naman si Korina, walang kalaban-laban* (she is pitiful and so powerless)," he said. "They know very well that she is innocent. The records would speak for themselves. She was not present when the supposed incident took place."

Earlier, Inocencio, 42, accused Sanchez and her supposed boyfriend Paul Aquino of beating her up and then throwing her out of Aquino's unit at Bel-Air Condominium in Makati last Dec. 21.

Mauricio yesterday filed against Sanchez a case for violation of RA 1161, otherwise known as the Social Security System Law, before a Pasig City court. The host of a free legal advice radio show on dzBB, Mauricio explained that under the law, domestic helpers earning more than P1,000 a month are entitled to SSS benefits, and that they are supposed to remit their contributions to the SSS. In her affidavit, Inocencio said Sanchez hired her on Sept. 27 of this year with a P3,500 salary per month.

Observers saw Mauricio's decision to accept Inocencio's case against the controversial broadcaster as a result of a raging war between ABS-CBN and GMA-7. But Panelo said the issue should not be taken as such, and pointed out that Mauricio does not speak for GMA-7.

Mauricio said he and his client might file more charges against Sanchez aside from violation of the SSS Law and serious physical injury charges that the Makati police were set to forward to the Makati Prosecutor's Office. He said these charges would include libel and perjury.

Inocencio said that when she started working for Sanchez, she told the broadcaster's secretary named Juliet that she was a member of the SSS and that her SSS contribution should be deducted from her salary. She said that she brought up the issue of her SSS contribution with Sanchez but "she (Sanchez) only kept cursing and cursing. Because of this, Sanchez didn't deduct my SSS contribution and she also did not remit to the SSS the said contribution." Inocencio said her contributions for the month of October, November and December were not remitted to the SSS.

If found guilty, Sanchez faces imprisonment from six to 12 years.

Sanchez, in turn, yesterday filed before a Makati City court charges of qualified theft against Inocencio for the alleged theft of her bracelet worth P250,000. Panelo said that Inocencio knew about the necklace when the maid denied she stole it, claiming Sanchez had pawned it.

"The admission means she knew there was something (that was) stolen," Panelo said. "That constitutes probable cause. She was privy and she had access to steal."

Earlier, Inocencio said that Sanchez pawned the bracelet to pay for the treatment of a child who was injured when the broadcaster's vehicle figured in an accident with an FX, which the child was riding sometime last Dec. 18.

Panelo denied the allegation, warning that he and his client would file more charges such as grave threats and grave oral defamation against Inocencio.

"We will put her behind bars," he said of the maid. "She has done too much."

Taking another potshot at Mauricio, Panelo said Mauricio was "coaching" his client.

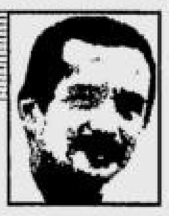
"Korina told me that he (Mauricio) was just seeking publicity. And I agree," Panelo said.

But Mauricio just laughed off Panelo's comments and stressed that taking Inocencio's case was part of the free legal assistance that he extended to poor clients.

"I don't want to dignify that with a comment," he said. "In any case, we'll just see each other in court."

Time puts Bata Reyes up in the Hall of Fame

BARE EYE



Recah Trinidad

THOSE opposed to the naming of golfer Dorothy Delasin as Athlete of the Year brought up the issue of allegiance. They wondered which flag Delasin, a Fil-Am who won two legs of the world ladies pro tour this year, sings her national anthem for.

As for Manny Pacquiao, the country's hottest boxing prizefight property, he allegedly failed to swing the big votes after he was dragged into a dirty, dreadful draw by a lawless foe in Las Vegas.

No clear winner there. But I sincerely thought Efren "Bata" Reyes should have won it solo. He made it to the grand finish line way, way ahead of the entire pack.

OK. I've stopped inviting myself whenever the PSA (Philippine Sportswriters Association) picks its choice for the year's most outstanding athlete.

It's too late. They've already named the choices.

But, for whatever it's worth, my vote goes to Bata Reyes.

Both Pacquiao and Delasin deserved the nominations.

But Reyes was a class by himself. His shining achievements in the international field have made him worthy of being installed in the Hall of Fame.

***

In fact, Time Magazine has done exactly that. It has bestowed Reyes the honor with a colorful three-page feature in its Dec. 24 issue that bunched together the world's best and worst in cinema, design, books, music, scandals and, yes, sports.

"Since revealing himself in Texas (in 1985)," says Time, "Reyes has toured the world, winning, dazzling, realigning the game's balance of power and becoming his country's sole bona fide international sports superstar....his face, along with President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's, greets arrivals at Manila's airport. Pool cues have became (sic) a hot accessory and new halls have sprouted everywhere."

It's a stunning, scintillating, super plug, which not even the likes of the late Gabriel Elorde, (seven years world junior lightweight boxing champ) or any other great Filipino competitor like bowler Paeng Nepomuceno (four-time World Cup winner) had merited from Time.

Phil Zabriske, the writer who traveled all the way down to Bata's nest in Angeles City, cited The Magician's incredible feats this year. "He took his bad eyes and bad elbows to the Tokyo 9-Ball Tournament and won the most lucrative event in sport, pocketing about P160,000."

The following week, Bata surfaced in Poland to bag the World League title.

What many have failed to note though was that Bata visibly grew younger, hotter after a mano-a-mano with the glamorous Jeanette Lee, who swore, after being beaten 13-5, that Reyes is "truly the greatest player that ever lived."

***

Now, Bata is again saying his days as top grandmaster may be coming to an end.

He actually started singing that silly tune in 1999. After he had won the World Pool Championship in Cardiff, he told this reporter at the airport, before boarding for the Brunei Southeast Asian Games, that he could no longer play as good as he used to.

He was, he swore, something like 60 to 65 percent of his old self. He said he had lost his speed and sharpness.

Silly how all of us fell for the bait.

Bata proceeded to pocket at least two gold medals, at the same time inspiring the RP team to the pool championship in Brunei.

His days at the top are numbered?

He indeed appeared over the hill after his back-to-back miseries in the Cardiff World Championship in 2000 and this year, where Bata failed to survive the Round of 32, an awful dip considering the expectations and accolades.

With that his dismal exit, I started to suggest Bata's game could now be fit for the museum.

I stand corrected. Time Magazine is right. Bata, the liar, is fit for the Hall of Fame.

Strawberry boyfriend dared to take lie detector test

BY CHRISTIAN V. ESGUERRA

THE FAMILY of businessman Raynaldo Picar yesterday challenged Strawberry's boyfriend Mark Doromal to undergo a lie detector test "to determine once and for all," who between him and Doromal is telling the truth in connection with the former child actress' killing last week.

Picar also volunteered to undergo a similar test and said he and his family are willing to undergo the test anytime.

"If (Doromal) has nothing to hide, he would readily subject himself and his men to polygraph test," he told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview yesterday.

Picar's wife Corazon also revealed yesterday that their family had to hire bodyguards after armed men believed to be from the security agency of Doromal's father allegedly began casing their house in BF Executive Village in Las Piñas. Picar said that last Tuesday, at least five heavily armed men in similar "combat" uniforms were seen casing the house early in the morning.

Picar posed the lie detector challenge after conflicting accounts of the Dec. 18 shooting of Anouk "Strawberry" Baldo following a petty traffic altercation in Las Piñas two days earlier.

Picar said it was Doromal and his security aides who fired at the car of Strawberry during the incident.

Strawberry suffered three gunshot wounds in the head and was in a coma for two days before she died. She was 25.

To prove their innocence, the Picars went straight to police on the same day of the shooting to undergo paraffin tests.

WAZZZZUP ? ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

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Cowboy Grill NOVALICHES Q.C.	BROWNIE STREETLIFE/IMPROM2	HOMOSAPIENS ☎936.9757
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Cowboy Grill BIÑAN, LAGUNA	POWERON MUSIC CIRCUIT	NO ENTRANCE FEE ☎ (049) 511.7268
Partyplace SAN FERNANDO, PAMPANGA	SOUTHBORDER	☎ (045)961.3360

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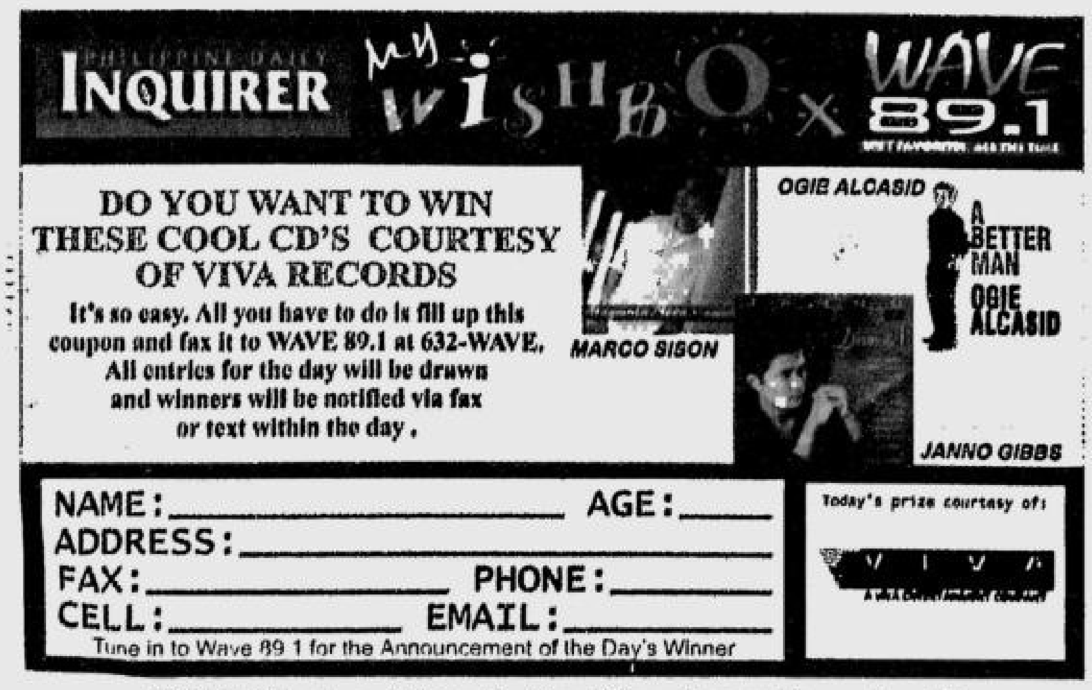

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MARCO SISON

OGIE ALCASID A BETTER MAN

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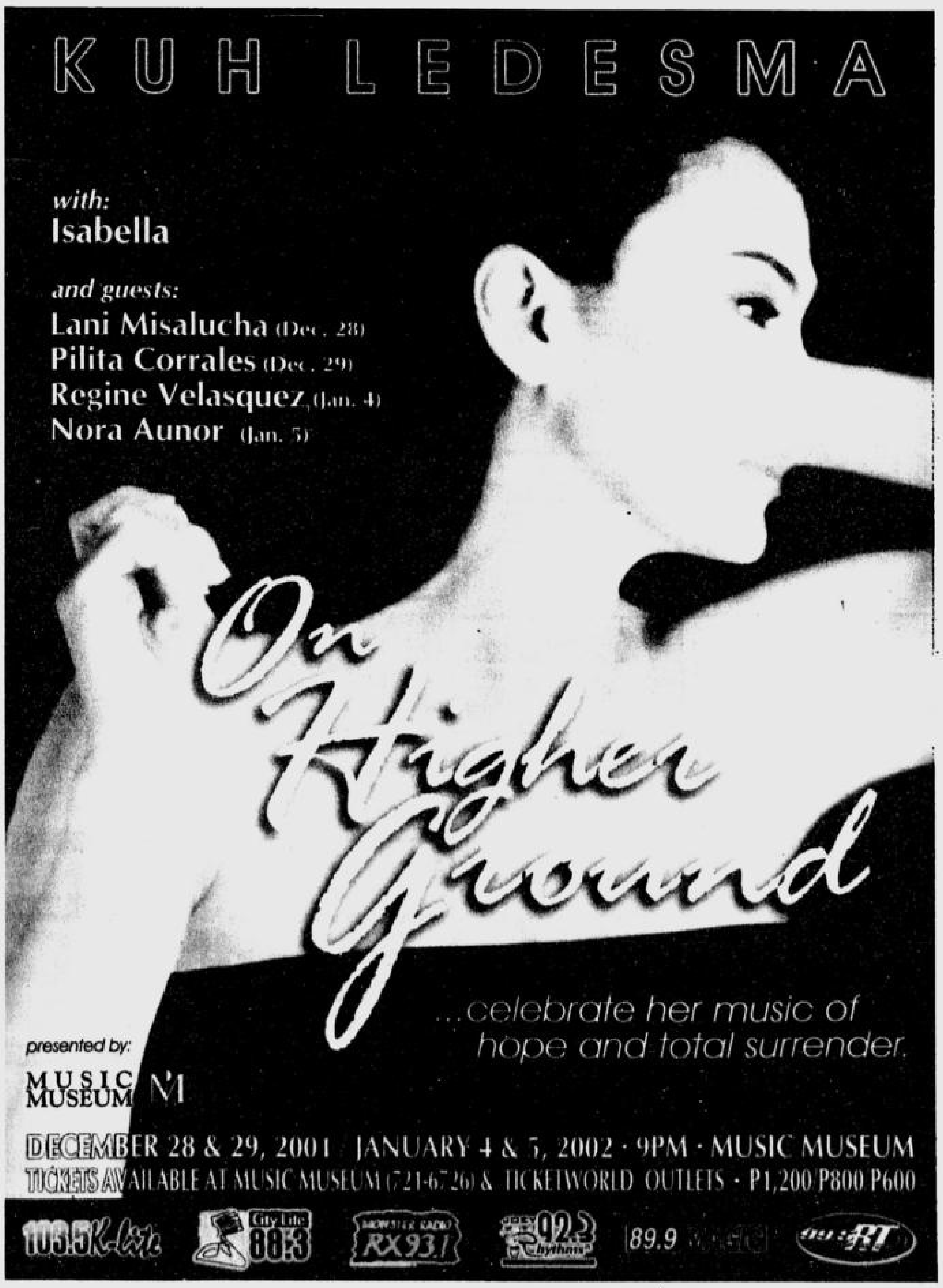

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Japanese singer records in Tagalog

JACKY Woo, star and producer of two martial arts movies filmed and released by Solar Films in the Philippines, is in town to promote his self-titled album.

The actor had the lyrics of several songs he has composed and recorded in original Japanese translated into Tagalog for his album.

He expects to make more movies during his stay in the country using his own music as background for his films.

Jacky has completed filming "The Hustler" with Jo Canonizado under Forward Group, which Solar Films will release by January.

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4 HINDI KITA MA-REACH — In DTS DIGITAL SOUND

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1 SUSMARYOSEP! 4 FATHERS — In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
2 YAMASHITA — In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
3 BAHAY NI LOLA THX — In DSD/SDDS/DTS DIGITAL SOUND
4 TATARIN — In DTS DIGITAL SOUND — Art Film
5 HUBOG — In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
6 HINDI KITA MA-REACH — In DTS/SDDS DIGITAL SOUND
7 BAGONG BUWAN — In DTS DIGITAL SOUND

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3 YAMASHITA — In DOLBY DIGITAL SOUND
4 REGINE AT THE MOVIES DEC. 28, 29, 30 — Onstage!

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3 (DTS) TATARIN
4 GOLD (DTS) YAMASHITA
5 GOLD (DOLBY) 4 FATHERS
6 GOLD (SDDS) HUBOG
7 GOLD (DOLBY) HINDI KITA MA-REACH
8 YAMASHITA
9 BAHAY NI LOLA
10 HUBOG

Pearl Plaza Cinemas
(Parañaque) tel. 853.4486

1 YAMASHITA
2 TATARIN
3 (DTS) HINDI KITA MA-REACH
4 BAGONG BUWAN
5 4 FATHERS
6 (DTS) BAHAY NI LOLA
Golden Pearl THX

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 831.6603

1 TATARIN
2 YAMASHITA
3 BAGONG BUWAN

starmall Movies
(Shaw Blvd.) tel 724.4986

1 BAHAY NI LOLA
2 HUBOG
3 4 FATHERS
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL) BAGONG BUWAN
5 TATARIN

METROPOLIS star
543.3927 loc. 150

1 BAHAY NI LOLA
2 HINDI KITA MA-REACH
3 YAMASHITA
4 TATARIN
5 BAGONG BUWAN
6 4 FATHERS
7
8

PREMIERE CINEMA THX
(Makati City) tel 751.2011 to13

1 TATARIN

Center Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007

1 YAMASHITA
2 MONSTERS

FCM FAIRVIEW CENTER MALL, INC.
tel 930.9515

1 TATARIN
2 HUBOG
3 BAHAY NI LOLA

Spring
(Libertad, Pasay City) tel 831.7864

1 BAHAY NI LOLA
A HUBOG

Sunshine
(FTI, Taguig) tel 838.4301 loc. 3376

1 HUBOG
2 YAMASHITA
3 BAGONG BUWAN
4 HINDI KITA MA-REACH

GOTESCO CINEMA

City
(Manila) tel 734.8568

1 (DOLBY) YAMASHITA
2 BAGONG BUWAN
3 TATARIN
4 HINDI KITA MA-REACH
5 4 FATHERS
6
7 (DTS)
8 (SDDS) HUBOG
9 (DOLBY) BAHAY NI LOLA

Caloocan
tel 362.3508

2 HINDI KITA MA-REACH

Grand Central
(Caloocan) tel 364.3781

1 BAHAY NI LOLA
2 TATARIN
3 YAMASHITA
4 (SDDS) HUBOG
5 HINDI KITA MA-REACH
6 (DOLBY) BAHAY NI LOLA
7 (DTS) BAGONG BUWAN
8 4 FATHERS
9 TATARIN

Commonwealth
tel 951.0083

1 (DTS) BAHAY NI LOLA
2 HUBOG
3 YAMASHITA
4 TATARIN
5 (SDDS) BAGONG BUWAN
6 HINDI KITA MA-REACH
7 (DOLBY) 4 FATHERS
8 HUBOG

Ortigas
tel 656.6795

1 BAGONG BUWAN
2 4 FATHERS
3 (DTS) HINDI KITA MA-REACH
4 YAMASHITA
5 (SDDS) HUBOG

Universal
(Manila) tel 733.2470

1 YAMASHITA

Sampaguita
(Cubao) tel 911.7888

1 BAHAY NI LOLA

Dilson
(Manila) tel 734.7724

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Lords TATARIN
Jennet HUBOG

MARKETPLACE Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856

1 TATARIN
2 BAGONG BUWAN
3 YAMASHITA

Prima
(Pasig) tel 641.1215

3 TATARIN

Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
SUPER CINERAMA
tel 733.4238

1 (DOLBY) BAHAY NI LOLA
2 HUBOG
3 4 FATHERS
4 BAGONG BUWAN
5 TATARIN

New Divisoria Mall
DIVISORIA CINEMA
tel 244.4619

1 HINDI KITA MA-REACH
2 YAMASHITA
3 TATARIN
4 CLOSED
5 CLOSED
6 HUBOG

Baclaran LRT
LRT CINEMA
tel 512.0115

1 (DOLBY) BAHAY NI LOLA
2 HUBOG
3 YAMASHITA

Berma
tel 879.2029

1 4 FATHERS
2 BAHAY NI LOLA

CitiMall
(Parañaque) tel 820.7269

1 BAHAY NI LOLA
2 YAMASHITA

CINEMA 2000

Cinema 2000 Target Mall
(Sta. Rosa Laguna)
tel (049) 534.2185 / 534.2198

1 TATARIN
2 BAHAY NI LOLA
3 (DTS) YAMASHITA

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383

1 BAGONG BUWAN
2 (DTS) BAHAY NI LOLA
3 (DOLBY) YAMASHITA
4 TATARIN

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146

1 BAHAY NI LOLA
2 (DOLBY) YAMASHITA
3 (DTS) TATARIN
4 BAGONG BUWAN

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771

1 YAMASHITA
2 BAHAY NI LOLA
3 SOON TO OPEN
4 SOON TO OPEN

Cinema 2000 MovieTown
(Tarlac)

1 HUBOG
2 TATARIN
3 (DOLBY) BAHAY NI LOLA
4 (DTS) YAMASHITA

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276

1 (SDDS) HINDI KITA MA-REACH
2 TATARIN
3 YAMASHITA
4 (DTS) BAGONG BUWAN

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202

1 (DOLBY) YAMASHITA
2 BAHAY NI LOLA
3 (DTS) TATARIN
4 HINDI KITA MA-REACH
5 BAGONG BUWAN

Olivarez Tri-Cinema
(Biñan) tel (049) 511.8883

1 BAHAY NI LOLA
2 BAGONG BUWAN
3 TATARIN

Olivarez Los Baños
tel (049) 249-2558

1 BAHAY NI LOLA
2 BAGONG BUWAN
3 YAMASHITA

Olivarez Tagaytay
tel (046) 413.0311

1 BAHAY NI LOLA
2 YAMASHITA
3 BAGONG BUWAN

Morales Cinema
(Biñan) tel (049) 511.9736

1 BAGONG BUWAN
2 TATARIN
3 HINDI KITA MA-REACH

Cabuyao
(Laguna City) tel (049) 531.4808

1 (DTS) BAHAY NI LOLA
2 (DTS) TATARIN

Emperor
(Rosario Cavite) tel (046) 438.1657

1 HUBOG
2 HINDI KITA MA-REACH
3 4 FATHERS

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1 YAMASHITA
2 HUBOG
3 BAHAY NI LOLA
4 TATARIN

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03

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2 BAHAY NI LOLA
3 YAMASHITA
4 TATARIN

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2 BAHAY NI LOLA
3 BAGONG BUWAN
4 HUBOG
5 TATARIN
6 SUSMARYOSEP (4 FATHERS)
7 DI KA MAREACH
8 BAGONG BUWAN
9 HUBOG
10 DI KA MAREACH

THX

ERMITA
536-7809 TO 12

1 YAMASHITA
2 BAHAY NI LOLA
3 BAGONG BUWAN
4 DI KA MAREACH
5 TATARIN
6 SUSMARYOSEP (4 FATHERS)
7 HUBOG

METRO EAST
632-9118-16 /633-7041

1 HUBOG
2 BAHAY NI LOLA
3 DI KA MAREACH
4 YAMASHITA
5 TATARIN
6 BAGONG BUWAN
7 SUSMARYOSEP (4 FATHERS)
8 BAHAY NI LOLA

NOVALICHES
936-0229 to 31

1 HUBOG
2 TATARIN
3 BAGONG BUWAN
4 DI KA MAREACH
5 BAHAY NI LOLA
6 SUSMARYOSEP (4 FATHERS)
7 YAMASHITA
8 BAGONG BUWAN

IMUS
(046) 471-6190

1 DI KA MAREACH
2 SUSMARYOSEP (4 FATHERS)
3 TATARIN
4 HUBOG
5 YAMASHITA
6 BAHAY NI LOLA

BACOLOD
(034) 441-0453 / 0459

1 YAMASHITA
2 HUBOG
3 BAHAY NI LOLA
4 ROCKSTAR
5 PAGDATING NG PANAHON
6 MUSKETEER

ILOILO
(033) 336- 0077 / 0079

1 BAGONG BUWAN
2 YAMASHITA
3 HUBOG
4 BAHAY NI LOLA
5 TATARIN
6 ROCKSTAR

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THEATER MOVIE GUIDE

ARANETA CENTER THEATERS 911-3101

ALI MALL CINEPLEX-1	PAGDATING NG PANAHON
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-2	SUTLA (RE-ISSUE)
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-3 (DDS)	MUSKETEER
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-4 (SDDS)	HARRY POTTER
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-5 (DTS)	EARTHQUAKE
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-6 (DOLBY)	MVP
ALI MALL CINEPLEX-7(DOLBY)	SUMMER CATCH
FARMERS PLAZA-1(DOLBY)	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
FARMERS PLAZA-2(DOLBY)	PISNGI
FIESTA CARNIVAL	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
NEW FRONTIER	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION

MANILA

EASTERN	
MAXIM	CLOSED
MIRAMAR	DALAWA SI EBA / HIYAS SA PARAISO
ODEON	BAGONG BUWAN
ODEON-2	YAMASHITA
ROBEN	HUBOG
TANDEM-1	SEX MEDUSA
TANDEM-2	SEX EDUCATION
TIMES	PUKYUTAN / STORY OF US

QUEZON CITY

ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	CLOSED
ACT-4	CLOSED
CORONET-2	ORIGINAL SIN
QUEZON-1	HUBOG
REMAR	BAGONG BUWAN
REMAR-2	YAMASHITA

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA

A	NAIIBANG HAYOP
B	ALIPIN NG TUKSO
C	

MANDALUYONG CITY

SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	HARRY POTTER
CINEMA-2	THE MUSKETEER

CAINTA RIZAL

STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	ROCKSTAR
CINEMA-2	MASAKIT HUWAG IPILIT
CINEMA-3	HUWAG KANG KIKIBO
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	THE SCORE
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	MONSTER, INC.
CINEMA-6	OTHER SIDE OF THE LAW
CINEMA-7	SUTLA (RI)
CINEMA-8	PISNGI
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	HARRY POTTER
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	SUMMER CATCH
CINEMA-11(SDDS)	EARTHQUAKE
CINEMA-12	MOST VALUABLE PRIMATE
CINEMA-14	MUSKETEER
CINEMA-15	PAGDATING NG PANAHON

LORES

CINEMA-2	CLOSED
CINEMA-3	CLOSED

POWER PLANT CINEMA

CINEMA-1	HUBOG
CINEMA-2	BAHAY NI LOLA
CINEMA-3	TATARIN
CINEMA-4	YAMASHITA
CINEMA-5	FOUR FATHERS
CINEMA-6	BAGONG BUWAN

UNIWIDE METROMALL

(LAS PIÑAS)	
CINEMA-1	
CINEMA-2	
CINEMA-4	

UNIWIDE COASTAL MALL

(PARAÑAQUE)	
CINEMA-1	ALIPIN NG TUKSO
CINEMA-2	THE OTHER SIDE OF LOVE
CINEMA-4	ALAMID

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4173888

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2 DI KITA MA-REACH
3 YAMASHITA
4 BAGONG BUWAN
5 BAGONG BUWAN
6 BAHAY NI LOLA
7 4 FATHERS
8 HUBOG

SM CENTERPOINT
7149522 -7161416

1 YAMASHITA
2 DI KITA MA-REACH
3 BAHAY NI LOLA
4 4 FATHERS
5 BAGONG BUWAN
6 BAHAY NI LOLA
7 TATARIN
8 4 FATHERS
9 HUBOG
10 BAGONG BUWAN

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
9350749

1 YAMASHITA
2 DI KITA MA-REACH
3 TATARIN
4 4 FATHERS
5 BAGONG BUWAN
6 BAHAY NI LOLA
7 HUBOG
8 YAMASHITA
9 BAGONG BUWAN
10 TATARIN
11 DI KITA MA-REACH
12 4 FATHERS

SM CITY MANILA
5239240

1 DI KITA MA-REACH
2 BAHAY NI LOLA
3 TATARIN
4 YAMASHITA
5 4 FATHERS
6 HUBOG
7 TATARIN
8 DI KITA MA-REACH
9 BAGONG BUWAN
10 BAHAY NI LOLA
11 4 FATHERS
12 HUBOG

SM MEGAMALL
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1 YAMASHITA
2 4 FATHERS
3 TATARIN
4 HUBOG
5 DI KITA MA-REACH
6 YAMASHITA
7 4 FATHERS
8 BAHAY NI LOLA
9 BAGONG BUWAN
10 BAHAY NI LOLA
11 BAGONG BUWAN
12 HUBOG

SM TUTUBAN
2514302

1 BAGONG BUWAN
2 BAHAY NI LOLA
3 YAMASHITA
4 4 FATHERS

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
9285452

1 BAHAY NI LOLA
2 HUBOG
3 DI KITA MA-REACH
4 YAMASHITA
5 TATARIN
6 BAGONG BUWAN
7 4 FATHERS
8 BAHAY NI LOLA
9 TATARIN
10 DI KITA MA-REACH
11 4 FATHERS
12 BAGONG BUWAN

SM SOUTHMALL
8066089 • 8066782

1 4 FATHERS
2 DI KITA MA-REACH
3 HUBOG
4 BAHAY NI LOLA
5 YAMASHITA
6 BAHAY NI LOLA
7 TATARIN
8 BAGONG BUWAN
9 YAMASHITA
10 4 FATHERS

SM GUADALUPE COMM'L
8820905

1 HUBOG
2 4 FATHERS
3 DI KITA MA-REACH

SM CEBU
2313676

1 HARRY POTTER
2 MUSKETEER
3 BAHAY NI LOLA
4 BAGONG BUWAN
5 ROCKSTAR
6 HUBOG
7 TATARIN

SM ILOILO
3209422

1 HUBOG
2 CLOSED
3 HARRY POTTER
4 YAMASHITA
5 BAGONG BUWAN
6 BAHAY NI LOLA
7 CLOSED
8 TATARIN

SM PAMPANGA
7128015

1 BAGONG BUWAN
2 TATARIN
3 YAMASHITA
4 4 FATHERS
5 BAHAY NI LOLA
6 BAHAY NI LOLA

SM SUCAT
8294975

1 DI KITA MA-REACH
2 TATARIN
3 BAGONG BUWAN
4 4 FATHERS

SM DAVAO

1 YAMASHITA
2 BAHAY NI LOLA
3 HUBOG
4 BAGONG BUWAN
5 TATARIN
6 MUSKETEER

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ENTERTAINMENT

LOUIE C. CAMINO, Editor

ALCASID. Chums out another collection of stirring ballads in his latest album

Music makes Ogie 'A Better Man'

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

Leah Salterio

OGIE Alcasid is undoubtedly in his best element churning out stirring ballads, which have become anthems of hopeless romantics. Who can compete with the heart-wrenching tunes he composed and recorded, like "Bakit Ngayon Ka Lang," "Nandito Ako," "Sa Kanya," "Mahal Kita, Walang Iba," "Pangako" and "Kailangan Ko'y Ikaw"?

In his latest album, "A Better Man" (his first under Viva Records), Ogie unleashes another collection of love anthems.

The title of the album was inspired by a line delivered by **Jack Nicholson** to **Helen Hunt** in the movie, "As Good As It Gets." As Melvin, Nicholson tells his Carol (Hunt): "You make me want to be a better man."

That line stuck to Ogie's mind and from there, he managed to create the album's title track, "A Better Man," followed by 11 other cuts to complete the album.

Ogie wrote 11 out of the 12 tracks in his new album—all painful ballads, which talk about heartbreaks and promises to the one you love.

The first time I listened to "A Better Man," tracks like "Hanggang Ngayon" and "Sana Bukas, Mahal Mo Na Ako" made me cry.

I wonder what's with Ogie's lyrics and melodies that make my lachrymal glands instantly work. In fact, up to this day, my heart weeps and I still get teary-eyed whenever I hear "Bakit Ngayon Ka Lang."

"Hanggang Ngayon," incidentally, is the theme of the upcoming **Richard Gomez-Regine Velasquez** starrer of the same title for Viva Films.

Cecile Azarcon contributes the English tune, "One," which talks about spreading love, peace and unity. In the track, Ogie records with the other Viva divas such as **Lani Misalucha**, **Jaya** and Regine.

Filmfest topgrosser

AS of Wednesday afternoon, the second day of the Metro Manila Film Festival, Regal Films' "Bahay ni Lola" has raked in more than P8 million at the tills, a filmfest source told the INQUIRER.

That makes "Bahay ni Lola" the biggest money-maker among the seven official entries in this year's filmfest.

The second top-grossing entry is Star Cinema's "Bagong Buwan," followed by MaQ Films' "Yamashita, The Tiger's Treasure."

"Bahay ni Lola" is laden with special effects and is for general patronage (GP), so it captures a large chunk the kiddie viewers.

The opening day last Dec. 25 attracted families, which came in droves and enjoyed the scary thrills of the fantasy-horror flick, megged by **Uro de la Cruz**.

If the trend continues, Regal has a huge box office winner in "Bahay ni Lola," like last year's "Spirit Warriors," which became the filmfest topgrosser.

"Bahay ni Lola" stars **Gloria Romero, Gina Alajar, Manilyn Reynes** and **Aiza Seguerra.**

Ranking fourth in the box-office results is Golden Harvest Films' "Hubog," followed by Viva Films' "Tatarin."

Sixth placer is Maverick Films' "Hesusmaryosep (4 Fathers)" and seventh is E-Corp Films' "Hindi Kita Ma-Reach."

No complaints

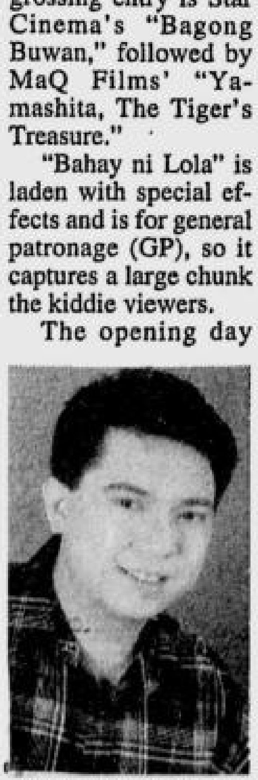
PRESIDENTIAL son **Mikey Macapagal-Arroyo** who topbills "Hindi Kita Ma-Reach," did not join the filmfest to compete with the giant productions like "Yamashita" and "Bagong Buwan."

The fact that his film made it to the seven official entries in this year's filmfest, is enough for Mikey.

"Hindi Kita Ma-Reach" is perhaps the entry with the least budget. The film hardly shows any trailers on TV, has no huge billboards and does not have the multi-million-peso publicity blitz of the other production outfits.

But Mikey does not complain. He is happy that for the first time, he gets to join the filmfest with his own movie.

According to E-Corp Films publicist **Aster Amoyo**, "Hindi Kita Ma-Reach" displayed good box-office results during the second day of the filmfest, when it ranked sixth among the entries.



ARROYO. Gets to join the filmfest for the first time

Reminiscing with sad songs at KTV party

KRIS AND TELL

Kris Aquino

LAST Sunday, "The Buzz" had its Christmas party in I.O. KTV in Jupiter Street. I had a blast because we were given two rooms, a big one where everybody gathered to sing and win in.the show's raffle for the staff, and another room where the buffet table was set up. Since the buffet room had it's own KTV set-up, I took full advantage of taking over the microphone in near solitude and started singing my favorite songs non-stop.

For those who enjoy singing, but are wobbly when it comes to carrying complicated tunes, I've found the songs for us. First on my playlist was **David Pomeranz**'s "Born For You."

"That I was born for you
It was written in the stars
Yes I was born for you
And the choice was never ours"

Super mushy I know, but the melody is simple enough for almost anybody, man or woman, to sing the song in tune and with feelings.

Next up, for the hopeful women out there, was **Selena**'s "Dreaming of You."

"Late at night when all the world is sleeping
I stay up and think of you
And I wish on a star that somewhere you are, thinking of me, too.
Wonder if you ever see me and I wonder if you know I'm there?
If you looked in my eyes, would you know what's inside. Would you even care?"

This song is best sung in a semi-breathy, bedroom voice. If you analyze the lyrics, the longing evoked in this song is a lot like what's expressed in **Aiza Seguerra**'s "Pagdating ng Panahon."

An added plus is that the song never gets too high you can acquit yourself admirably even if you haven't been blessed with the vocal range of **Regine, Lani** or **Zsa Zsa**.

As the night progressed, we couldn't escape some reminiscing. When you're already at ease with the people listening to your warbling, it gets easier to share your past heartaches. It was time for **Janet Jackson**'s "Again."

"A wounded heart you gave, my soul you took away
Good intentions you had many, I know you did
I come from a place that hurts
And God knows how I've cried
And I never want to return, never fall again."

I don't know why, but by next month, it will be three years since **Josh**'s dad and I parted ways, and it was only that night that I found an appropriate song.

My KTV repertoire before consisted mainly of **Barry Manilow** tunes, especially "Somewhere Down the Road," "Even Now" and "If I Should Love Again." Those songs finally struck me as plain pathetic.

Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time" was an early '80s hit. There's a stanza in the song that truly hit home.

"After my picture fades and darkness has turned to grey
Watching through windows, you're wondering if I'm okay?
Secrets stolen from deep inside, the drum beats out of time."

I was explaining to "The Buzz" writers, our producers, and my director that in my case there are no existing pictures of Josh with both his parents taken at any point since he was 4 years old. In his last two, end of year school plays which we both attended, Josh had pictures with his dad and with me, but none of all three of us together.

After having shared a life together, by choice and by circumstance, we now just get our updates on each other through TV and whatever bits and pieces about our private lives eventually get written about. After listening closely to the words of this song, I did start to wonder if during the times he was home at 7 p.m. on a week night, did he switch channels immediately to avoid seeing me or does he sometimes tune in just to check "if I'm okay?"

This piece is a powerfully sad song, poetic in the subtlety of the message. I have to admit, it's not within my capacity to be true to the refrain's lyrics.

You can look at "Time After Time" in two distinct ways. The first is that regardless of what happens, time after time you'll both still be there for each other. That's the assurance being given by a person who believes in loving for a lifetime, regardless of where the road has led him (or her) to.

That first interpretation is perfect for childhood friends or the best of friends who lost touch, but somehow know that "*if you're lost, you can look and you'll find me . . .*" since an old friendship is easier to re-kindle than a past serious love.

The second interpretation is that there's a time, after the time for a couple has run out, that will be filled with realizations of all that was left unheard and unsaid, of a not-meant-to-be couple's inability to grow at the same pace, and the emotional baggage in "the almost left behind suitcase of memories."

At its core, you now exist in what's simply your own time, no longer and never again in what was once your time together.

One of the best versions of "Time After Time I've ever heard is Zsa Zsa's. I first heard it in her birthday concert at the Captain's Bar in Mandarin. That concert, "In My Life" was recorded for a live album, which has just been released in the market. Her rendition is a listening must-have!

Cautionary scenes from three quiz shows

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

LOCAL TV's quiz show scene perked up recently with the latest bid of a "Game Ka Na Ba?" contestant to win a million pesos. He described himself as a competitive kind of person, and he had a lot of confidence to boot, so he went into the final round really determined to make it.

Given three choices of fields from which to draw the million-peso question (current events, travel and Broadway musicals), he chose the third and was given a real stumper to figure out:

"In the musical "Chess," there is a song titled "One Night in Bangkok" that mentions the Philippines in its lyrics. What is the country mentioned before the Philippines?"

The contestant, Monet, sort of knew the song, so he sang it to himself, in the hope of recalling that specific lyric—but, so sorry, he answered Vietnam and then Cambodia, but he wasn't sure.

Quizmaster **Kris Aquino** then gave him a way out: should he decide not to answer the question, he would still end up not just with P100,000, but a total of P250,000 plus an entertainment showcase for his grandmother.

Monet finally decided that discretion was the better part of valor, and opted for the still substantial consolation prize. A good thing, too, because the correct answer turned out to be really far-out: Iceland!

Meanwhile, on another quiz show, another contestant was about to win P500,000.

However, instead of simply accepting the contestant's answer, the quizmaster asked her if she was sure, and later pointed out that she still had one lifeline left. The contestant then decided to use the lifeline. In the end, her answer, turned out to be correct. But after that round, she no longer had any lifeline left, and decided to stop at P500,000.

Question: Why was she made to hesitate and use up her last lifeline? And, if she hadn't used it up, would she have been more confident about proceeding to the next round and perhaps winning more money?

This is why we urge quizmasters not to provide "coloring" in their reactions to contestants' answers. Whether the answer is wrong or right, the quizmaster should simply accept it without delay or comment, and then simply state if the answer is correct or not. That way, contestants would have only themselves to blame or congratulate, whatever the outcome of the quiz may be.

Finally, on "The Weakest Link" recently, some young contestants surprised mature viewers by making negative statements against the older contestants on the panel. They said that they were voting the older contestants out because they were too slow or not energetic enough, so they were holding the group back from winning more money.

This anti-age stand should not have been left unchallenged by the program's quizmaster, particularly since that episode's progress showed that the young contestants' bias was unfounded: some of the older contestants were in fact doing better than the "fast" and "energetic" youths.

Is the young contestants' anti-age bias shared by the show itself? The program's mature viewers certainly would not countenance this facile slur against people who happen to be on the wrong side of 40.

If the show does not share this bias, it should advice younger contestants to stop articulating it in future telecasts. After all, like the young contestants, the older contestants were deemed fit to compete by the show's screening group.

Another observation about "The Weakest Link:" there are very few female contestants on the show—sometimes only one or two in a panel of eight. Why is this so? We don't think it's because the program has an anti-woman bias, to boot.

This must be the case because the show is tough, competitive and requires contestants to cold-bloodedly "off" each other, and many Filipino women simply don't care to be part of that rather curt and cynical scene. What do you think?

TWO FOR THE SHOW. Mother and daughter tandem Kuh Ledesma and Isabella.

'On Higher Ground'

IN her career and personal life, 2001 has been a most challenging year for pop diva Kuh Ledesma.

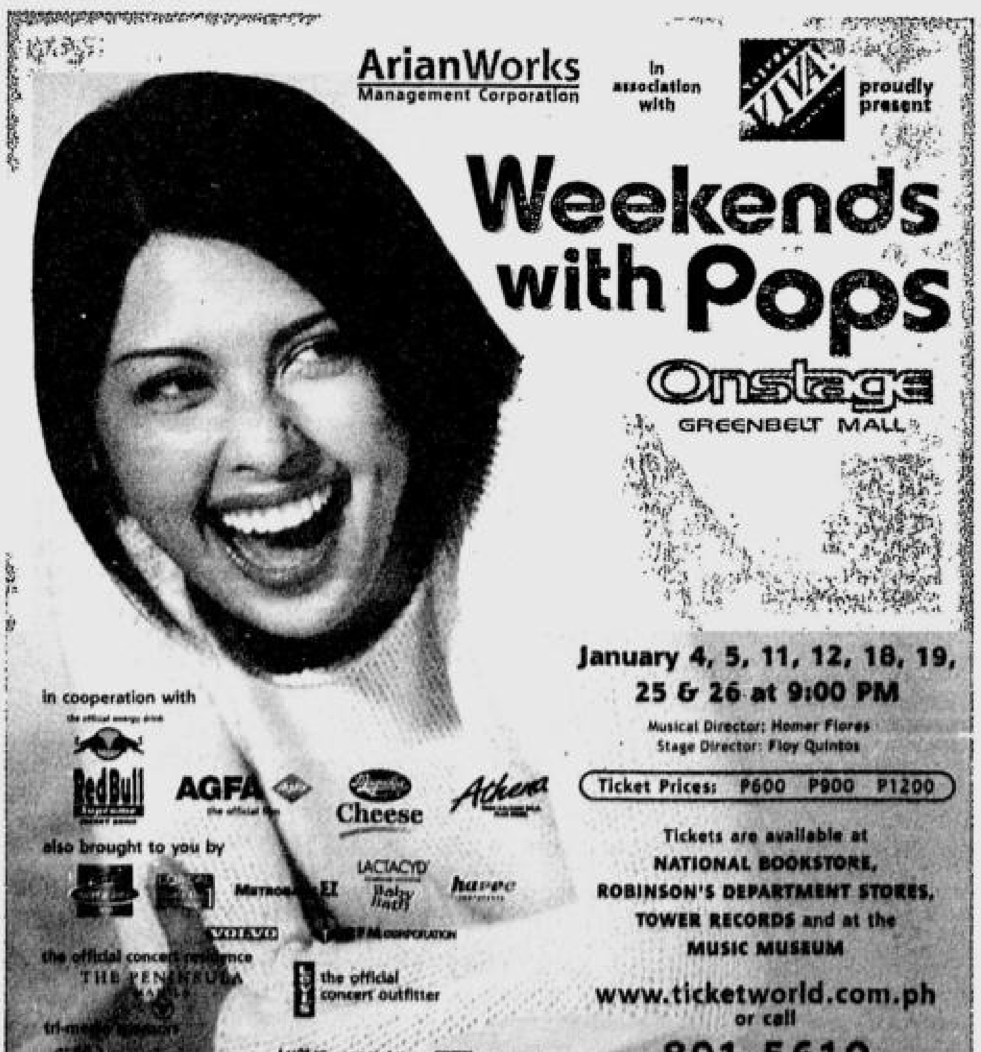
The fire that gutted her restaurant-bar, Republic of Malate, was probably the biggest trial Kuh has had to face this year. But this and other challenges only served to strengthen Kuh's faith.

"When the fire happened, I wasn't even bothered because I knew there was a reason for it," says Kuh. "God used these things to test my faith and bring me to another level spiritually."

That "new level" provided the inspiration for Kuh's concert series, "On Higher Ground," a reflection of her newfound inner peace, set for Dec. 28, 29, Jan. 4 and 5 at the Music Museum.

Kuh will be joined by her daughter Isabella. Other guests are Lani Misalucha (Dec. 28), Pilita Corrales (Dec. 29), Regine Velasquez (Jan. 4) and superstar Nora Aunor (Jan. 5).

For tickets, call Good News Café at 551-7251 to 55 or Music Museum at 721-0635/721-6726.



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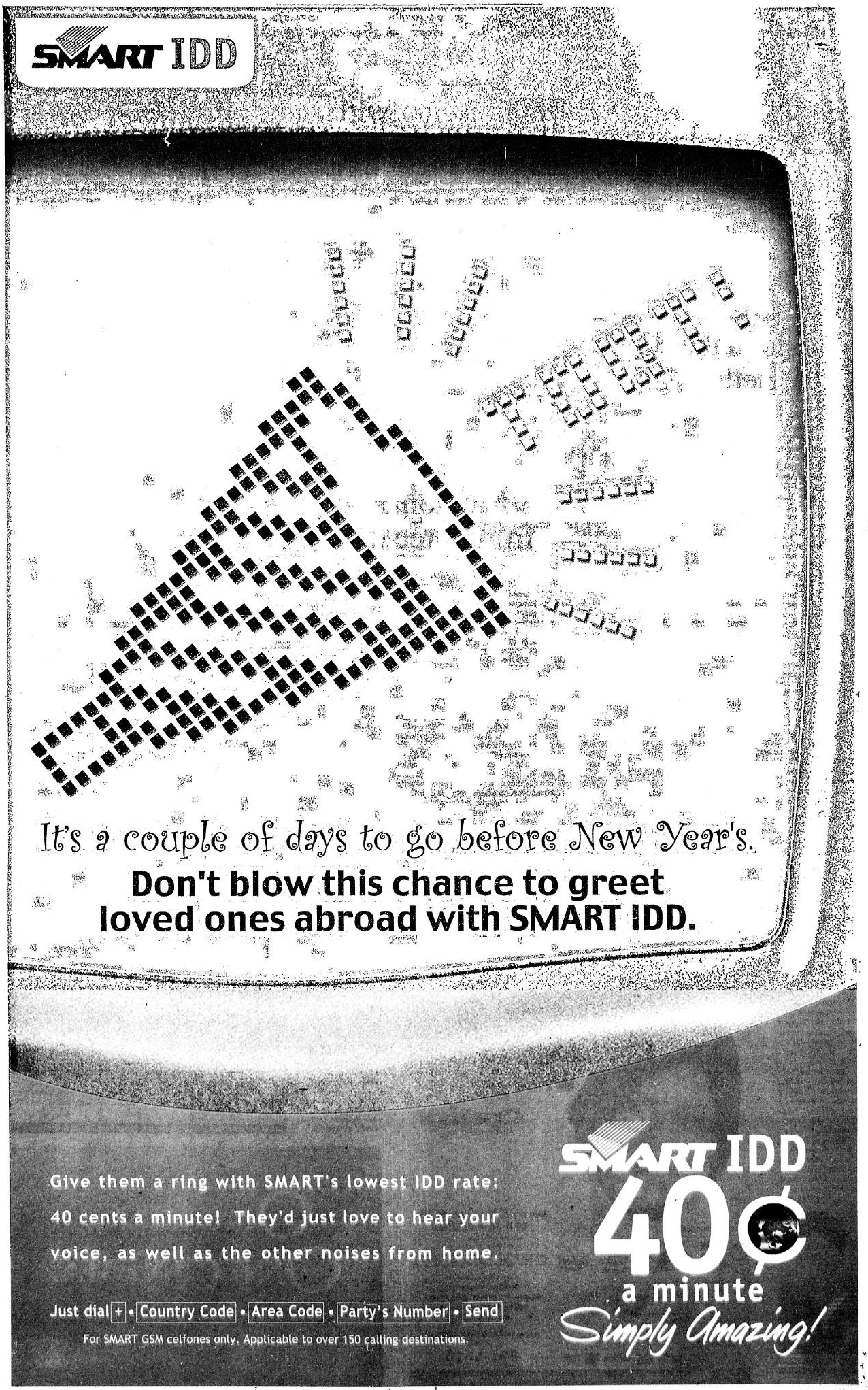

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Manufacturing output falls 10.1%

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COUNTRY'S manufacturing output, which accounts for about a quarter of the gross domestic product, contracted sharply in October possibly indicating a poor fourth quarter growth.

The National Statistics Office's integrated monthly survey of selected industries showed that the volume of production in October fell by 10.1 percent year-on-year, down from 4.6 percent in the previous month.

This was the seventh straight month that the country's volume of production index registered a decline.

Analysts traced the decline to the sluggish consumer demand here and in major markets overseas which was brought about by the slowdown in the economies of the country's biggest trading partners such as the US and Japan.

Many of the manufactured products that registered a decline in production volume in October were meant for the export markets, said ATR Kim Eng Securities research head Luz Lorenzo.

The worst hit by the weakening consumer demand were petroleum products, beverage, basic metals, non-metallic mineral products, paper and paper products, rubber products and miscellaneous manufactured goods.

Paper and paper products posted the highest production drop of 31.7 percent during the period. The beverage and basic metals sectors also posted double digit output declines.

In the case of petroleum products, Lorenzo said the decline in the production of this sector could be due to the increasing use of alternative sources of fuel like natural gas and hydro-electricity in the country.

The sharp decline in the export demand for Philippine-made products have prompted manufacturers to cut down their volumes.

"There were concerns about the impact of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on consumer spending and consumer confidence. The manufacturers are worried that the repercussions will remain for a long period and that consumer spending will further deteriorate," AB Capital Securities analyst Jose Vistan said.

The sectors that managed to expand production volumes despite a sluggish market during the period included food, footwear and wearing apparel manufacturing.

The machinery sector (excluding electrical, fabricated metals, publishing/printing) and wood/wood products likewise registered increases in production volume.

In the same month, the country's dollar earnings from merchandise exports fell 13.5 percent as the market for electronic components, the country's top export earner, continued to tighten due to the global economic slowdown.

From January to October this year, the country's export earnings have dropped by 14 percent to $26.87 billion.

The NSO also reported that the value of production in the country managed to increase by a modest 2.2 percent, although this was way below the 9.9 percent growth posted in September this year.

The average capacity utilization of industries surveyed by the NSO in October was 75.9 percent.

The NSO said that only 21.8 percent of the establishments operated at their full (90-100 percent) capacity while about 37.7 percent managed to operate at 70-89 percent capacity. Those operating below 70 percent capacity accounted for the bulk of 40.5 percent.

Sectors that posted more than 80 percent capacity utilization rates included tobacco, rubber and petroleum products. *With a report from AP*

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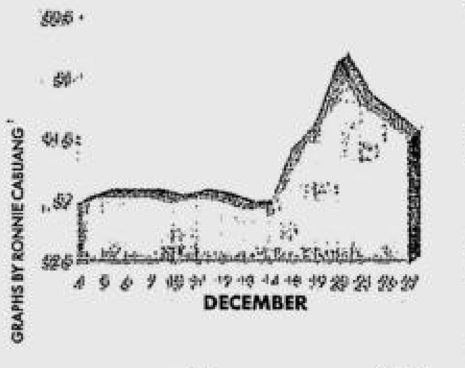

Peso-Dollar Rate

₱ 51.49 = $1
As of 5 p.m.,
Dec. 27, 2001

¥ 131.68 = $1
As of 5 p.m.,
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GOLD:$280.00/280.50
per ounce Hong Kong,
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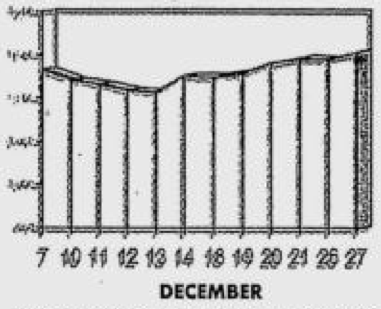
STOCK MARKET

Shares up

PSE Composite Index



(See stock market report on Page B2)

THE STOCK market shrugged off holiday lethargy to end higher on Thursday, supported by some window-dressing in selected large-caps, traders said.

The main index ended 7.37 points, or 0.64 percent, up at 1,152.86 points.

Turnover shot up to P2.47 billion but almost P1.2 billion worth of which were in cross trades.

"It's the typical yearend window-dressing," Eagle Equities president Joey Roxas said, adding, however that some recent gainers lost ground after investors took profits.

Mutual Fund Management Co. of the Philippines president Efren Cruz said simple window-dressing may be too glib an explanation for Thursday's rise.

"I would like to believe it could be more of people buying into companies in anticipation of a modest upturn (in the economy) next year," he said. "These are the companies investors believe could stage a recovery or turnaround next year."

Cruz said few investors would want to hold positions going into a long holiday weekend and he anticipated a slight dip in the main index on Friday, the last trading day of the year.

The stock market will be closed next Monday and Tuesday. *Reuters*

Inflation seen at 3.9-4.3%

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas is projecting the inflation rate to further slow down in December to a range of 3.9 percent to 4.3 percent, from the 16-month low of 4.4 percent in November, despite the increased consumer spending during the Christmas season.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura yesterday said the BSP's forecast took into account "lower oil prices, stable food prices, lower interest rates and a stable foreign exchange rate."

"It (the December inflation number) will definitely bring the full-year inflation average down to 6.1 percent," Buenaventura said.

The government has projected a 4.0-percent annual inflation in December, according to Economic Planning Secretary Dante Canlas.

The December inflation figures are scheduled to be released by the National Statistics Office on Jan. 7.

He also said the BSP would not intervene in the foreign exchange rate despite some jitters due to the weakening of the Japanese yen in the past few days.

"It looks like the foreign exchange is very stable. The range will be closer to 50:$1 level by yearend," he said.

He said President Macapagal-Arroyo's projection that the peso would appreciate to that level this year was proven right.

The low inflation numbers in recent months gave the BSP some room to lower the reserve requirement slapped on banks by 2 percentage points recently.

Singapore firm keen on taking over Samal hotel

DAVAO CITY—A Singaporean firm intends to take over the facilities of the Malaysian-owned Ekran Berhad Hotel on Samal Island.

Tiger Capital Investments Ltd. said it was looking forward to developing the place in the tradition of famous resorts in the Bahamas and the Cayman Islands by infusing more than $100 million.

Sonny Sablada, the company's project director, said the company had already considered several locations but found Samal as the one with the most potential.

"It would be better if there is already an existing

SINGAPORE/ B2

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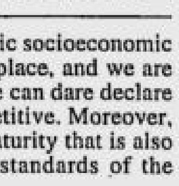
Per DTI-NCR Permit no. 4234 Series of 2001

Massacre of innocent workers

LABOR MANAGEMENT FORUM



Josephus B. Jimenez

IN today's Church calendar, the more than 77 million Filipinos nationwide, about 50 million of whom are workers, will observe the "Niños Inocentes," which refer to the mass killing of infants to make sure that the king's decree to eliminate the Child Messiah is carried out with precision and assurance. The killing was done but the objective was not attained.

We wish to draw an analogy from that event more than a millennium ago. We submit that the massive retrenchments and redundancies of workers today can be somehow likened to a massacre and the workers compared to innocent infants because they are powerless, uneducated and without any support system to pursue either a legal battle or a parliamentary struggle that are both protracted and expensive within the framework of today's decision-making mechanisms.

These retrenchments and redundancies are not the fault of businessmen and employers who, themselves, are also oppressed by the confluence of economic and financial woes and the onslaught of cutthroat competition brought about by the negative consequences of globalization, absent a viable set of safety nets for both struggling firms and the workers, too.

The proponents of globalization, trade liberalization and sudden collapse of nationalistic trade barriers should now be held accountable for the closure of companies, reduction of working days and work hours, unabated installation of labor-saving devices that displaced thousands of Filipino workers. They should now answer to the suffering masses, and they better come up with a plausible explanation.

The incumbent president, being a leading advocate of a globalized market as a senator and vice president, has now seemed to underplay her advocacy upon reaching the portals of Malacañang. She seems to have distanced herself from the purveyors of trade liberalization.

Perhaps she has finally seen the folly of rushing toward globalization when the basic socioeconomic infrastructures are not yet put in place, and we are far from attaining a level when we can dare declare that indeed we are globally competitive. Moreover, we Filipinos have that level of maturity that is also far from being at par with the standards of the world.

Senate bigwigs like Angara and Drilon, whose Accra law firm lawyers for global companies apart from the coco levy firms, should also explain how to cushion the impact of their pet advocacy to globalize the economy. They have to craft a remedy to recover losses in jobs and income if they wish to go further in their political ambitions.

House politicians like De Venecia and Lobregat, the coco advocates along with Enrile, should now clean up the mess of their reckless massacre of jobs brought about by the monster they have created called globalization. All the senators and congressmen who profit every time volumes of cases rise due to issues raised against layoffs should also explain how to save the country from a social upheaval.

Many local firms are closing for they cannot compete against low-cost producing outfits operating in countries like China, Vietnam and Thailand that inundate our local markets with cheap imports. Businessmen have no choice but to save whatever remains of their capital by declaring redundancies, layoffs and retrenchments. Thus, the root cause of the massacre of jobs is that major error in government policy.

The one to blame for loss of job is not the employers, who are beset with over-regulation by a financially bankrupt government bureaucracy and overburdened by taxation by a graft-ridden government. Much less are the workers to blame themselves for they have carried the pains and the loads of building the nation under extremely difficult situations.

The one and only group to blame are the corrupt, power-hungry politicians who suck the blood of this nation by their shameless and unabated corruption. They are the weakest links. They are like King Herod who, in their greed for power, money and prestige, are ordering the massacre of jobs to make sure that all probable saviors of the nation, like Jesus, should die as early as infancy.

Politicians are the bad guys in human society. They neither produce goods nor market and distribute them. They don't contribute in the wealth making and wealth trading activities of man. But they squander a lot of peoples' money in their insatiable greed and shamelessness.

Politicians don't create value or add a cubit into the nation's gross domestic product. They don't make life easier for the people. They impose taxes, they use public money to show off their prowess in talking and debating and they cheat the government via pork barrels and kickbacks.

These callous men in government should be warned. Like the massacre of babies a millennium ago, the unabated massacre of jobs today shall be implemented with no let-up, as they are ongoing. But their objective will not be attained. "*Mabibigo ang mga hangal.*" They should be the one to go, these unchristian purveyors of globalization, for they are the weakest links. Goodbye. *(For comments, you can reach the writer at the following e-mail address: josephus.jimenez@pcppi.com.ph)*

Prime Orion to sell non-core properties to reduce debts

BY DORIS C. DUMLAO

PRIME Orion Philippines Inc., formerly known as Guoco Holdings (Philippines) Inc., has put on the block three non-core property assets as part of its ongoing efforts to trim its debts.

"We will liquidate some of the noncore assets and continue our restructuring," Guoco executive vice president Yuen Po Seng told reporters.

The "less critical" assets put up for sale were a 44-hectare raw land in Kay-Anlog Laguna, a 32.53-hectare semi-developed industrial estate in Sto. Tomas, Batangas and Prime Orion's 30-percent equity in Mandaue Realty and Resources Corp.

Proceeds from the asset sale will be used to reduce Prime Orion's debts. The company is saddled with P6.22 billion worth of debts, of which P2.64 billion consisted of loans payable; P1.73 billion, accounts payable and accrued expenses; and, P1.79 billion, a current portion of a long-term liability.

In a recent report, Prime Orion admitted that the real estate slump might make it difficult to sell these assets.

"There has been minimal progress in the negotiations for these assets as the prolonged slowdown in the real estate market during the past fiscal year continued to set back efforts to sell these properties," the company said.

Prime Orion is engaged in manufacturing and distribution, real estate and financial services business. Its four core subsidiaries are Lepanto Ceramics Inc., Pepsi Cola Products Philippines Inc., Cyber Bay Corp. and Tutuban Properties Inc.

As part of the company's restructuring, it completed during its last fiscal year the sale of three other non-core investments.

Apart from selling its stake in Dao Heng Bank, it sold its interest in Zeus Holdings Inc. held through 60-percent owned Picop Holdings Inc., in December 2000, although ownership of the listed shell company was retained.

"Right now, we are still studying what to do with the shell company," he said.

Last January, it also sold the investment banking operations of DHB Capital Philippines Inc. and refocused its financial advisory operations on subsidiary HLG Asset Management Inc., where it would hold a 55-percent stake.

The company is also seeking to restructure about P900 million worth of debts with the Philippine National Bank following the resolution of P1.56 billion worth of liabilities with Banco de Oro Universal Bank and United Coconut Planters Bank.

Singapore . . .

(From page B1)

infrastructure. It just depends if we agree on the concept," Sablada said.

Tiger Capital Investments has put Ekran into its priorities and would establish contacts with the resort's previous owners, he said.

Ekran had so far invested a total of P250 million for its hotel and casino facilities in Samal, but the suspension of flights from Taiwan and the slowdown in tourist arrivals, coupled with the effects of the financial crisis in 1997, forced it to stop operations.

The Malaysian firm said it had been suffering P4 million in losses every month since it started operations in 1997.

Sablada said Tiger Capital Investments was willing to invest up to $120 million in the project.

But while showing interest in reviving the bankrupt resort, Sablada said his company was looking into other areas to develop in Samal and in this city.

"We have the most beautiful beaches in the world, even better than those in Boracay," he said.

Sablada said Tiger Capital Investments was looking at starting its project by June next year.

Initial focus would be the local tourists, but eventually, travelers from other countries would also be targeted, he said. ***Joel B. Escovilla, PDI Mindanao Bureau***

SEC sets crackdown on banks offering high-yield securities

BY ELENA R. TORRIJOS

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission plans to crack down on banks and other financial institutions that have been offering securities, such as mutual funds and other investment instruments, that have not been registered with it.

SEC Chair Lilia Bautista said it had come to her attention that many banks were offering to their Philippine clients high-yield securities, often common trust funds and mutual funds, and made it appear that these transactions were proposed and consummated abroad.

SEC Associate Commissioner Juanita Cueto said engaging in the solicitation or selling of securities not registered with the commission was prohibited under the law.

Bautista said many clients of banks offering high-yield securities had been asking her if there would be anything wrong if they invested their dollars in the instruments.

"Under the law, technically, they (financial institutions) should not sell these things but these are being sold by the banks," Bautista said.

The SEC is now drafting a letter to ask the central whether it has approved banks' sale of these unregistered securities. The BSP has jurisdiction over the banks and common trust fund operations of financial institutions.

"The dollar savings account has a very low return so many banks offer to their clients mutual funds abroad. The banks make it appear that the offering is made abroad but, in reality, they offer here and they consummate the transaction here," the SEC chief noted.

Bautista also said that next year, the SEC would work on the establishment of a commodity futures exchange to discourage the operations of underground financial futures commodity traders, estimated to number 15 in the country.

The SEC has delayed the processing of applications for the establishment of a futures exchange because of lack of manpower and other constraints.

No debts to Benpres, says Digitel

DIGITAL Telecommunications Philippines Inc. said yesterday that it did not owe Benpres Holdings Corp. and was not the source and owner of the 795.05 million Digitel shares that Benpres recently acquired.

In a statement sent to the INQUIRER, Digitel said the Gokongwei group's stake in Digitel remained stable at around 47 percent.

On Wednesday, Benpres disclosed it was taking a 12.5-percent stake in Digitel as settlement for several money market placements.

Benpres informed the Philippine Stock Exchange that it would take possession of 795.05 million Digitel shares by exercising its right on shares pledged as collateral for several money market placements made by Benpres earlier this year.

"Benpres was constrained to acquire the shares as settlement for the money market placements," Benpres corporate secretary Enrique Quiason told the local bourse.

"Immediately thereafter, Benpres will commence a search for interested buyers for said shares," he added.

Benpres did not identify in its disclosure the original owner of the Digitel shares.

Market analysts suggested, however, that based on the latest record of Digitel's shareholder structure, the same amount of shares was registered to the trust and investment departments of either the old Asian Banking Corp. or AB Capital Corp.

This means Asianbank is holding the shares in trust for another investor—a minority stockholder of Digitel and not the cash-laden Gokongwei group, the analysts said.

An analyst, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said in early 1999, there were rumors that businessman Mark Jimenez, now a lawmaker, was accumulating Digitel shares. He suggested that Jimenez, a close adviser of deposed President Joseph Estrada who had offered to testify against his former benefactor, was now unloading his shares in Digitel 2003.

Subic agency changes promotions strategy

BY GIL C. CABACUNGAN JR.

THE SUBIC Bay Metropolitan Authority has changed its investment promotion tactics by targeting more non-electronic firms in the former American naval base turned economic zone next year.

SBMA Chair Felicito Payumo said although electronic enterprises, such as Taiwanese personal computer maker Acer, would continue to account for the bulk of exports from Subic, he sees non-electronics increasing its share from 15 percent to 40 percent in the near term.

Payumo said the current global economic slump showed the risks of being too dependent on electronic firms especially when this sector bore the brunt of the slowdown and is on its worst depression in 40 years.

"We want to balance our investor portfolio because we believe that Subic offers a lot of opportunities for a lot of sectors not only in electronics," Payumo said.

Among the non-electronics industries that SBMA has attracted is American services giant Kellog Brown & Root (KBR) which is planning to pump in at least $100 million to build a world-class ship repair facility.

Payumo said the KBR projects would revive Subic's past glory as a center for ship repair in the country. "We used to have hundreds of skilled workers in ship repair that went abroad to look for work when the Americans pulled out in 1991. With KBR's project, we hope to get them back to help build a new generation of ship repair experts," Payumo said.

Aside from ship repair, Payumo said the SBMA has likewise lured in industries in steel fabrication; information technology services; and wood processing.

CURRENCIES

Dec. 27, 2001 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Foreign currency in US$	Foreign currency in Peso
United States	Dollar	1.135976	1.000000	51.3520
Japan	Yen	0.008687	0.007647	0.3927
United Kingdom	Pound	1.651369	1.453700	74.6504
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.145701	0.128261	6.5865
Switzerland	Franc	0.672374	0.591891	30.3948
Canada	Dollar	0.709631	0.624688	32.0790
Singapore	Dollar	0.614539	0.540979	27.7804
Australia	Dollar	0.576931	0.507872	26.0802
Bahrain	Dinar	3.013360	2.652661	136.2194
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.302927	0.266667	13.6939
Brunei	Dollar	0.615039	0.541419	27.8029
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000111	0.000098	0.0050
Thailand	Baht	0.025817	0.022727	1.1671
UAE	Dirham	0.309362	0.272331	13.9847
Korea	Won	0.000869	0.000765	0.0393
Euro	Euro	1.000000	0.880300	45.2052
Germany	Mark	0.511292	0.45009	23.1130
France	Franc	0.152450	0.134201	6.8915
Netherlands	Guilder	0.453781	0.399463	20.5132
Austria	Schilling	0.072673	0.063974	3.2852
Belgium	Franc	0.024789	0.021822	1.1206
Italy	Lire	0.000517	0.000455	0.0234
Finland	Markka	0.168186	0.148056	7.6030
Portugal	Escudo	0.004988	0.004391	0.2255
Spain	Peseta	0.006010	0.005291	0.2717
Luxemburg	Franc	0.024789	0.021822	1.1206
Ireland	Punt	1.269738	1.11775	57.3987

Philippine Stock Exchange

(As of Thursday, December 27, 2001)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Bank of the Phil. Islands	57.5	57.5	57	57.5	19,182,400
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	26.5	27	25	25	1,322,500
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	190	194	190	193	67,200
Philippine National Bank	67	67.5	67	67.5	150,100
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	17	17.5	17	17.5	8,000
Security Bank Corp.	17	17.25	16.75	17	45,900
Union Bank of the Phil.	16.25	16.25	15.75	16	158,000
FINANCIAL SERVICE					
Bankard Inc.	1.1	1.16	1.06	1.16	1,130,000
Filipino Fund Inc.	0.32	0.32	0.32	0.32	150,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1280	1280	1280	1280	3,250
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	0.59	0.59	0.39	0.39	120,000
Sun Life Financial Serv.	1050	1050	1050	1050	11,050
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	24	24	24	24	12,200
Diversified Fin. Network	4.05	7.2	3.7	7.2	339,000
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.37	50,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	615	640	615	630	12,020
Piltel	0.25	0.33	0.25	0.33	130,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	415	417.5	415	417.5	14,480
Philweb.Com Inc.	0.018	0.018	0.017	0.018	52,300,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	23	23	23	23	1,000
Manila Electric Co. B	31	31	29.5	30	468,900
Petron Corp.	1.48	1.5	1.46	1.48	1,717,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.95	0.95	0.87	0.95	420,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	2.18	2.24	2.18	2.18	2,264,000
William, Gothong & Aboitiz	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	50,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Union Cement Corp.	0.92	0.93	0.92	0.93	50,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	2	2	2	2	15,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	11.75	12	11.75	11.75	102,500
La Tondeña Distillers Inc.	23	23	23	23	4,000
RFM Corp.	2.34	2.34	2.34	2.34	192,000
San Miguel Corp. A	42.5	43	42.5	42.5	329,000
San Miguel Corp. B	53	53.5	52.5	52.5	662,600
Vitarich Corp.	0.4	0.4	0.38	0.38	200,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.7	0.7	0.69	0.69	80,000
Ayala Corp.	4.65	4.7	4.65	4.65	1,878,000
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	200,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	15,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.79	0.8	0.79	0.8	150,000
A. Soriano Corp.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	50,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	36,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9.2	10.5	9.2	10.5	36,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.6	0.6	0.59	0.6	12,480,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.45	0.45	0.44	0.44	110,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.14	0.14	0.13	0.13	430,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.175	0.18	630,000
Ebecom Holdings Inc.	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	600,000
Fil-Estate Corp.	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.175	20,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	0.86	0.86	0.86	0.86	50,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	4,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	26.5	26.5	25.5	26	248,200
Guoco Holdings (Phils.)	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	200,000
Ionics Inc.	6.7	6.7	6.3	6.3	96,000
Megaworld Corp.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	3,820,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.32	0.33	0.3	0.3	2,960,000
Music Corp.	0.35	0.35	0.33	0.33	3,240,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	0.81	0.81	0.75	0.75	320,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Cen Azucar de la Carlota	2.65	2.65	2.65	2.65	100,000
Federal Chemicals Inc.	6.4	6.4	6.4	6.4	5,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.08	200,000
SPI Technologies Inc.	13.75	13.75	13.75	13.75	9,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICE					
Belle Corp.	0.55	0.55	0.53	0.54	3,770,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.46	0.46	0.46	0.46	10,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	70,000
Grand Plaza Hotel Corp.	17.25	17.25	17.25	17.25	2,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	23.75	23.75	23.75	23.75	626,900
Equitable PCI Bank-War	1.98	2	1.84	1.84	151,000
Globe Tel. A - Warrants	420	450	420	450	800
Globe Telecom Hldg. (Pdr)	595	620	595	620	3,100
Omico Corp. Warrant	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001	3,000,000
RFM Corp. - Pref.	4	4	4	4	10,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series I	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	1,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series V	10	10	10	10	1,300
PLDT (10% Pref) Series Y	10	10	10	10	1,000
Philweb.Com,Inc.-Warrants	0.0048	0.005	0.0048	0.005	49,000,000
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	9.3	9.5	9.3	9.5	2,020,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	4.75	4.85	4.75	4.85	3,628,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.32	0.32	0.3	0.31	2,620,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.23	0.235	0.23	0.235	400,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.74	1.78	1.7	1.72	6,772,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	40,000
City & Land Developers	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	40,000
Primetown Property Group	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	10,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	13,000
SM Development Corp.	0.9	0.9	0.89	0.9	120,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.3	6.3	6.2	6.3	6,959,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	0.68	0.68	0.68	0.68	20,000
Itogon-Suyoc Mines A	0.019	0.02	0.019	0.02	8,000,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	200,000
Omico Corp.	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	0.0034	10,000,000
Polar Mines & Dev't Corp.	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	8,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	100,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	0.245	0.25	0.245	0.25	540,000
OIL					
Imperial Res.	0.013	0.013	0.012	0.012	3,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0065	0.0065	0.006	0.006	446,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0065	0.0065	0.006	0.006	69,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.25	0.25	0.22	0.22	60,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	50,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.23	0.23	0.22	0.22	110,000

	SHARES	VALUE (P)
Banks & Fin Svc	27,368,400	2,234,937,090.00
Comm'l & Ind'l	145,968,000	157,626,800.00
PRO	20,602,000	74,042,050.00
Mining	26,860,000	507,900.00
OIL	518,220,000	3,312,400.00
GRAND TOTALS:	739,018,400	2,470,426,240.00

	AVERAGES	
Banks & Fin Svc	496.82	DOWN 0.43
Comm'l & Ind'l	1,557.89	UP 6.88
PRO	502.11	UP 10.13
Mining	1,008.50	DOWN 18.71
OIL	1.96	DOWN 0.01
All Shares Index	683.38	DOWN 5.26
Composite	1,152.86	UP 7.37

NO. OF ADVANCES: 31; NO. OF DECLINES: 33; NO. OF UNCHANGED: 34; NO. OF TRADED ISSUES: 98; NO. OF TRADES: 1,967

A company with a Philippine investment portfolio is seeking to dispose of certain relatively illiquid holdings. These are as follows:-

No. of Shares	Company
300,000	AGP Industrial Corporation
714,800	Atlas Consolidated Mining and Development Corporation (US register)
10,500,000	PetroEnergy Resources Corporation
892,000	Philippine National Construction Corporation
821,400	Victorias Milling Company Incorporated

Interested parties may contact the person mentioned below for further information:-

Michael Koh at (65) 882 2333 or Jeannie Yan at (852) 2978 7033

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PUBLIC NOTICES

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NOTICE OF LOSS

The orig. Board of Investment Certificate of Authority No. 1057 dated 7 Nov. 1978 and issued to Occidental Phil. Inc. (now Shell Phil. LLC) in accordance with the provisions of the Omnibus Investments Code of 1987 can no longer be located after diligent search and is declared lost for all legal intents and purposes.
(PDI-Dec. 28, 2001)

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11/F, BA Lepanto Building
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Tel. No. (02) 841-0044
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Brgy. Batangas Dos
Mariveles, Bataan
Tel. No. (047) 244-7441
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INVITATION FOR QUALIFICATION/ ELIGIBILITY AND BIDDING

The PNOC - Petrochemical Development Corporation (PPDC) invites interested contractors currently accredited with the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) in good standing to apply for qualification/eligibility and if subsequently found eligible, to bid for the following project described below:

I. Work Order No. : **WSC-01-004**
II. Project Title : **Earthworks and Slope Protection Works of PRII Expansion Area II**
III. Scope of Work : **Clearing and grubbing to include removal of obstruction, excavation, backfilling, spreading and compaction up to the required elevation, completion of CHB perimeter fence enclosure and drainage manholes.**
IV. Minimum Equipment Requirement :

Equipment Description	No. of Units
1. Bulldozer, 200-225 HP	3
2. Bulldozer, 300-335 HP	2
3. Payloader, 4 cu. yd. capacity	1
4. Dumptruck, 10-15 cu.m. capacity	12
5. Road Grader, 125 HP	2
6. Vibratory Compactor, Sheeps Foot, 9-10 Tons	3
7. Vibratory Compactor, Smooth Drum, 9-10 Tons	3
8. Water Truck, 10,000 Liters capacity	1

V. Project Location : Petrochemical Industrial Estate (PIIE) in Limay and Mariveles, Bataan, Philippines
VI. Approved Budget : Pesos Twenty Seven Million One Hundred Twenty Six Thousand Nine Hundred Eight and 10/100 (P27,126,908.10)
VII. Source of Funding : PNOC - Petrochemical Development Corporation
VIII. Estimated Contract Duration : One Hundred Thirty Five (135) Calendar Days
IX. PCAB License Minimum Requirement
License Qualifications
Classification : General Engineering
Category : AAA
Registration Qualifications
Kinds of Project : Road, Highway Pavement, Railways, Airport Horizontal Structures and Buildings
Size Range : Medium B
X. Similar Contracts : Land Site Development such as General Earthworks and Slope Protection Works
XI. Credit Line/Cash Deposit Certificate Requirement : Pesos Two Million Seven Hundred Twelve Thousand Six Hundred Ninety and 81/100 (P2,712,690.81)
XII. Eligibility Statement Forms : One (1) set each to be filled up and submitted for every project
Cost of Forms : One Hundred Pesos each set (P100.00/set)
Date and Time of Issuance : **January 2-11, 2002** from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Place of Issuance and Submission of Accomplished Eligibility Statements/ Documents : PNOC - Petrochemical Development Corporation 11th Floor, B.A. Lepanto Building, 8747 Paseo de Roxas, Makati City c/o Legal, Contracts and Administration Department or PNOC - Petrochemical Development Corporation Petrochem Park, Batangas Dos, Mariveles, Bataan c/o Site Administration Department
Deadline of Submission : On or before **January 18, 2002** at 3:00 p.m.
XIII. Notice of Eligibility/Ineligibility
Date and Time of Issuance : **January 14 - February 8, 2002** from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Place of Issuance : PNOC - Petrochemical Development Corporation 11th Floor, B.A. Lepanto Building, 8747 Paseo de Roxas,Makati City c/o Legal, Contracts and Administration Department
XIV. Pre-bid Conference Date and Time : **March 7, 2002** at 9:30 a.m.
Venue : PPDC Conference Room PNOC - Petrochemical Development Corporation Petrochem Park, Batangas Dos, Mariveles, Bataan c/o Site Administration Department
XV. Bid/Tender Documents : Shall be issued only to eligible contractors upon payment of the non-refundable cost of the documents
Cost of Documents : One Thousand Pesos each set (P1,000.00/set)
Date and Time of Issuance : **February 11-26, 2002** from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Place of Issuance : PNOC - Petrochemical Development Corporation 11th Floor, B.A. Lepanto Building, 8747 Paseo de Roxas, Makati City c/o Legal, Contracts and Administration Department or PNOC - Petrochemical Development Corporation Petrochem Park, Batangas Dos, Mariveles, Bataan c/o Site Administration Department
Deadline of Submission : On or before **April 3, 2002** at 1:30 p.m.
Place of Submission : PNOC - Petrochemical Development Corporation 11th Floor, B.A. Lepanto Building, 8747 Paseo de Roxas, Makati City c/o Legal, Contracts and Administration Department
XVI. **BID OPENING IN THE SAME VENUE WILL FOLLOW IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE DEADLINE OF SUBMISSION OF BIDS. LATE BIDS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

Prospective bidders are required to submit original copy of Credit Line/Cash Deposit Certificate/s and original copies of pertinent documents such as Contractor's PCAB License, audited Financial Statement, etc. for verification/authentication purposes.

All particulars relative to pre-qualification/eligibility, bidding, evaluation of bids and award of contract shall be governed by the provisions of PD 1594 and its implementing Rules and Regulations, as amended, and other applicable rules and regulations.

PPDC reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids thereof, to waive any defect or informality therein, or accept such bid or award any part thereof to any bidder/s whose bid/s is/are considered most advantageous to PPDC. PPDC further assume no obligation whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidders of any expenses or loss that it may incur in the preparation of their bids nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

(PDI – Dec. 22, 28, 2001 & Jan. 3, 2002)

(Sgd.) VICTORIO MARIO A. DIMAGIBA
BAC-Chairman

PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that Stock Cert. MERALCO A 149321, 230985, 402437, 501868, 575244, 541462, SMC A 01638219, 01616080, 99601147, 97502176, 96400892, 95297281, 94172868, PETRON A 282429,745782, 1253705, 1469640, under the name of Edna T. Mastrili ; ABS-CBN A 87473, SELECTA A 37457, PETRON A 145933, 745783, 1253706, 1469641, ROCKWELL 0088 under the name of Ronaldo P. Mastrili PETRON A 282428, under the of Norma Terencio If no contest is received now Cert. will be issued. (PDI-Dec. 13, 20 & 27 2001)

The orig. Board of Investment Certificate of Authority No. 2194 dated 11 Jan. 1991 and issued to Shell Phil. Exploration B.V. in accordance with the provisions of the Omnibus Investments Code of 1987 can no longer be located after diligent search and is declared lost for all legal intents and purposes.
(PDI-Dec. 28, 2001)

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is given that the estate of the late Spouses **SISENANDO S. SILVESTRE AND ROSARIO R. SILVESTRE** has been extrajudicially settled among his heirs as per Doc. #466 Page #95 Book XIX Series of 2001 Not. Public HENRY D. ADAZA of Manila (PDI-Dec. 28,2001, Jan. 4, 11, 2002)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late Fulgencio A. Reyes has been extrajudicially settled by his heirs on Oct. 1, 2001 under Doc.#419, Page#84, Bk #1, Series of 2001 by Notary Public Rablev Tobias M. Racho of Makati. (PDI-Dec. 28, 2001, Jan. 4, 11, 2002)

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late BERNABE G. REYES at Meralco Employees Savings and Loan Association ("MESALA") Account Capital Contribution and Savings Deposit has been extrajudicially settled by his heirs w/ waiver as per Doc#301 Page#62 Book# II, Series of 2001 by notary public Rommel L. Yap of Pasig City PDI 12/14,21,28,2001

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Pawnshop operators are now subject to VAT

TAX-FILES

By Liberty Z. Dumlao
SGV & CO.

WE all know what pawnshops are and why hard up customers can bear to part with their valuable possessions (albeit temporarily) in order to obtain the much needed loan from them.

Pledging one's property as security in exchange for money does seem simple. But the nature of the business operation of these ubiquitous pawnshops is still not very well defined, for tax purposes at least.

Under the 1986 National Internal Revenue Code, lending investors and pawnshops were subject to business taxes at fixed rates. Pawnshops were subject to a fixed business tax of P1,000.

On the other hand, lending investors, depending on the class of city or municipality where they were located, were imposed fixed business taxes ranging from P250 to P1,000.

In addition, lending investors were also subject to a percentage tax equivalent to 5 percent of their gross income.

On Jan. 1, 1988, Executive Order No. 273 (the VAT Law), which amended the provisions of the 1986 National Internal Revenue Code, took effect.

Among the amendments made by EO 273 involved the deletion of the fixed business taxes, including that imposed on pawnshops.

However, the percentage tax on the lending investors was unaffected by EO 273 and continued to be imposed on these entities.

Thus, upon the effectivity of EO 273 on Jan. 1, 1988, the operators of pawnshops had run their businesses without having to pay any form of business tax, whether fixed or percentage, from the national government—a boon that was not available to the other businesses.

Then the controversy arose in 1991, when the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) issued Revenue Memorandum Order (RMO) No. 15-91 which said that pawnshops are subject to the then 5 percent lending investors' tax.

The RMO in effect revoked the previous rulings of the BIR which stated that the business of pawnshop operators are different from that of the lending investors such that they had to be treated differently for tax purposes.

According to BIR Ruling 06-90, VAT Ruling Nos. 067-90, 022-90, and 226-90, pawnshops are not subject to any business tax, i.e., value-added tax (VAT), lending investor's tax or percentage tax imposed on non-bank financial intermediary.

In ruling that the pawnshop business is akin to a lending investor's business activity, the BIR Commissioner, in RMO 15-91, relied on then Section 194 (u) of the Tax Code, which defined the term 'Lending Investor' as including all persons who make a practice of lending money for themselves or others at interest.

According to the RMO, 'Pawnshop' shall refer to a person or entity engaged in the business of lending money on personal property delivered as security for loans and shall be synonymous and may be used interchangeably, with pawnbroker or pawn brokerage.

Thus, RMO 15-91 in effect states that the definition of the lending investor's business activity is broad enough to include that of the pawnshop's, such that pawnshops shall likewise be subject to the 5 percent lending investor's tax based on their gross income.

The BIR pronouncement in RMO 15-91 compelled the internal revenue officers to investigate and assess the pawnshop operators of the 5 percent lending investor's tax liability, effective Jan. 1, 1991.

As expected, pawnshop operators protested the tax assessment before the BIR and eventually, filed an appeal before the Court of Tax Appeals (CTA).

The CTA eventually ruled that pawnshop operators and lending investors are two distinct tax subjects that are treated differently under the Tax Code.

The CTA also relied on the decision of the Court of Appeals in the case entitled Commissioner of Internal Revenue vs. Hon. Andres B. Reyes Jr. CA GR SP No. 28824, promulgated on Dec. 23, 1993 which categorically held that a pawnshop is not a lending investor.

This same decision also ruled that RMO 15-91 is an invalid issuance and should not be given force and effect because the same involves a new and additional tax measure, which only Congress can impose.

The decision went on to say that in issuing RMO 15—91 imposing new taxes against pawnshops, the BIR Commissioner arrogated unto himself legislative powers, with grave abuse of discretion and in excess of jurisdiction.

With the declaration of RMO 15-91's nullity, the CTA declared the accompanying percentage tax assessment as likewise void and consequently, ordered its cancellation.

Instead of canceling the percentage tax assessment, the BIR went to the Court of Appeals to appeal the CTA decision.

In Commissioner of Internal Revenue vs. Agencia Exquisite of Bohol, Inc. CA-GR SP No. 59282, March 23, 2001, the Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the BIR and upheld the validity of the percentage tax assessment against the Respondent pawnshop.

In reversing the CTA decision, the CA ruled that a pawnshop is principally engaged in the business of lending money, as to fall under the broad definition of a lending investor in the Tax Code. The CA also ruled that RMO 15-91, which revoked the previous rulings on the matter, is a valid issuance of the BIR Commissioner who is authorized by the Tax Code to revoke, modify or reverse any previous rules and regulations, rules or circulars.

As a coup de grace, the CA held that the respondent pawnshop cannot point to any specific provision in the Pawnshop Regulation Act, from which it draws its breath of life, that explicitly exempts it from the coverage of RMO No. 15-91.

Predictably, the aforementioned decision of the Court of Appeals is now on appeal before the Supreme Court, for what the parties then hoped to be the final resolution on the issue of whether or not pawnshops are akin to lending investors, and should thus be treated similarly.

Be that as it may, the issuance of BIR Revenue Memorandum Circular No. 45-2001 (RMC 45-2001) dated Oct. 12, 2001, may have practically rendered the long-standing issue on the applicability of the 5 percent lending investor's tax on pawnshops as moot and academic.

In effect, RMC 45-2001 states that pawnshop operators are nonetheless subject to an altogether different kind of business tax, which is the 10 percent value-added tax (VAT) on their gross receipts which include interest charges, profit from the sale of pawned properties, and all other items of income derived from their business activity.

In explaining the rationale for the imposition of VAT on pawnshop operators, the Circular's text stated that while the issue has been the subject of litigation, Republic Act 7716, otherwise known as the Expanded Value-Added Tax Law (EVAT), was passed.

It repealed, among others, the old lending investor's tax and imposed the 10 percent VAT on all businesses except those specifically declared as exempt from VAT. This amendment was implemented beginning Jan. 1, 1996, pursuant to Revenue Regulations No. 7-95.

The underlying policy of the present EVAT law is to subject all lines of business to VAT, unless otherwise specifically provided therein.

Thus, unless expressly exempt from VAT, any person engaged in the sale of goods, property or services in the course of his trade or business shall be liable to the 10 percent VAT.

Those who are not liable to VAT pursuant to Section 109 (z) of the Tax Code of 1997 (where the annual gross income do not exceed P550,000) should have filed their appropriate tax returns within the same period.

In spite of this recent BIR issuance which gives the casual characterization of the business of a pawnshop operator as 'simply VAT-taxable,' thereby rendering all antecedent litigation academic, I, for one, would still be awaiting the Supreme Court decision on the matter.

(For comments and suggestions, please send your e-mail to sgv mail@Andersen WO

Old candy woman laments the dying bocayo-making biz

By Yolanda Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan—The afternoon breeze wafts the fragrance of fresh *bocayo* (coconut candy) being cooked in an old neighborhood in Barangay Pangapisan Sur here. Workers mill around grating coconuts, mixing the blend in big cooking wares, spreading and packaging the cooked *bocayo*.

In this village, Lolita Santos, 79, manages a *bocayo*-making venture that she inherited from her parents. She learned the trade directly from them.

As a child, she worked in her parents' factory to learn every step of the trade—from cooking to packaging to managing the business.

Santos has other siblings, but she was the only one who got interested in *bocayo*-making. "They opted for other jobs, and I was left to manage my parents' small business," she says.

The business has remained a household industry, with her factory located near her bungalow that was built through earnings from *bocayo*-making.

But the factory's "humble" appearance belies the fact that the lowly *bocayo* produced there has reached Filipino taste buds around the world.

For years, Santos has been supplying different "versions" of the coconut candy to exporters.

Her *bocayo* candies have been exported to Canada, Australia and United Kingdom.

Exporters go to Santos for their supply because of her quality sweets.

When she was younger, Santos used to cook her *bocayo* daily, using more than 1,000 fresh coconuts. She also personally marketed her product to different towns.

Age has slowed her down but she sees to it that she remains on top of her business.

"I cook only when there are orders from my *sukis* (regular customers)," she says.

She sells her *bocayo* under the brand name "Dudith," the name of one her daughters.

Unlike before when she personally peddled her *bocayo*, vendors now come to her factory to get their supply.

Santos once thought of personally supervising the export of her *bocayo* but changed her mind because of the paperwork needed to crack the international market.

Unfortunately, her daughters—a nurse and an accountant—did not want to manage the factory and are now working in their respective fields.

"I'm proud to say that it was my *bocayo* business that sent my daughters to college," Santos, a widow, says.

She, however, says that because of the young generation's seeming aversion to continue the family businesses, the *bocayo* industry in this town is breathing its last.

In this village famous for its delicious *bocayo*, many factories are closing shop.

"When I'm gone, my factory would also be gone, I suppose, because my daughters are working and not one of my nephews and nieces are keen on taking over," Santos laments.

Bocayo is also losing out to cheap imported candies and fresh fruits now flooding the market.

Jaime Lucas, Department of Trade and Industry provincial director, says the *bocayo* might find it hard to enter the Asian market because most Asians are not "sweet-toothed."

"Only Filipinos love sweets," he says.

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ALSO FOR TRAVELERS

New hotel targets large OFW market

MARKETING STRATEGY

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT hailed them as the new heroes. And they are, considering the hundreds of millions of dollars that Overseas Filipino Workers bring into the country, thus, propping up the economy.

Yet despite their contribution to economic growth, they do not get all of the support that they need.

When they process their papers, for instance, or appear before government offices, many of the OFWs who come from the provinces are forced to live or spend several days with extended family members because there are no decent and affordable living spaces for them.

Most of the hotels in Metro Manila are just way beyond their reach.

The Legend Hotels Intl. then thought that there must be a huge market for a hotel that would cater specifically to the needs of the huge OFW market. The result was Kabayan Hotel, which soft-opened just on Oct. 15.

Constructed as a hotel-cum deluxe dormitory, Kabayan Hotel is the first of its kind in the country and is positioned as a temporary home to departing or arriving OFWs, estimated to number about 6 million, bringing in $8 billion in remittances a year.

Kabayan was so named because it is the usual greeting of Filipinos when they meet fellow Filipinos abroad.

With six stories, 75 hotel rooms, 38 dormitory rooms and 227 beds, Kabayan Hotel is built according to international standards.

It features air-conditioned rooms, private toilet and bath, cable television, 24-hour running hot and cold water, room service, fire protection system and food and beverage outlets.

"Kabayan Hotel is the answer to what we have found out to be a basic need of returning and departing OFWs," says Nelson L. Napud, president of The Legend Hotels.

"Most want to stay in a place besides that of their relatives where they can feel secure and comfortable," Napud adds.

Affordability was also the key marketing factor for the Kabayan Hotel located in Pasay City, at the corner of Edsa and Zamora streets.

A deluxe room is pegged at only P1,080 a night, and P899 for a premium room. For dormitory accommodations, the rate goes as low as P199 per bed a day.

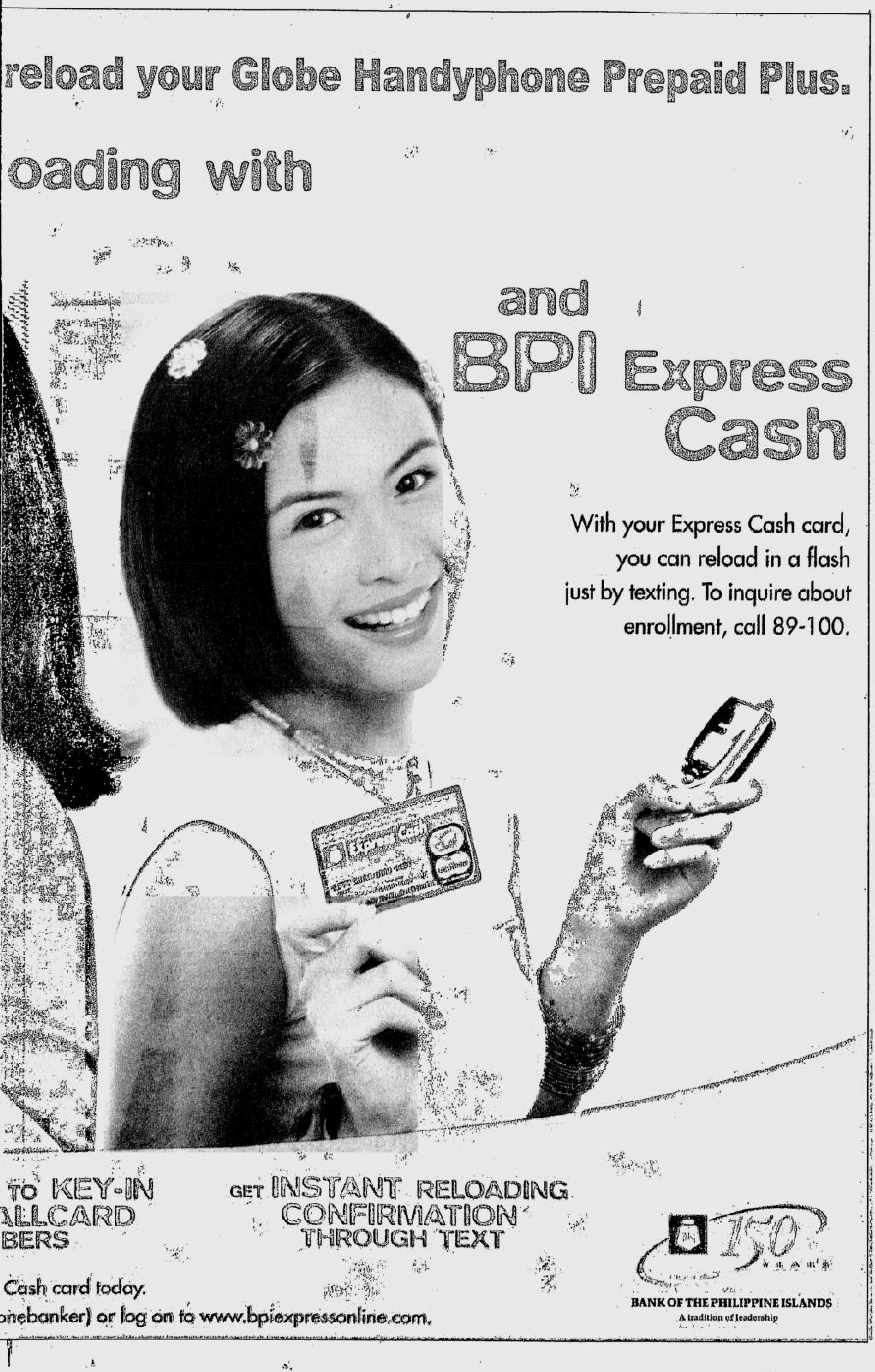
And the hotel is not open solely for OFWs. It is also geared to attract value-conscious travelers who want to stay in a place near the airport just before they leave for abroad.

This saves travelers from waking up very early or traveling straight from the provinces just to meet their flights.

And being affordable does not mean that Kabayan will scrimp on the service, says Napud.

He says that the staff is trained to be courteous and accommodating and to provide personalized service to guests of the Kabayan.

"Convenience of the traveler is of utmost importance as well as his immaculate sanitary requirements," he says.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Japan's job hoppers spurred by fear of stagnation

TOKYO—Tomoo Ishizaki was steadily climbing the corporate ladder at a top Japanese chip and electronics conglomerate, but he couldn't shake off the uneasy feeling that his career was going nowhere.

As a chief systems engineer, he designed computer systems for reservations and other data at a railway company, a project too important to his employer's reputation to allow any risky experimentation with cutting-edge technology.

"I'd said I wanted to do something different, but they told me I was needed in my division and wouldn't transfer me," he said.

"In the old days, if you knew one area, you were able to support your family as an engineer. But now I think we need to learn new things so you can propose or design new systems."

Japanese engineers traditionally spent their entire career at a single company and entrusted most of their career decisions to superiors.

But job frustration and doubts over whether they can rely on their employers these days to give them a secure, long-term livelihood mean that engineers are increasingly mobile.

"The biggest reason for people to leave their job is fear about the company," said Takahiro Maruyama, chief executive officer of Kreis and Co., a Japanese head-hunting firm.

"Many people have become aware no one will help them and they have to plan their own future."

Ishizaki echoed this view. *Reuters*

Cash . . .

(From page B8)

HALILI

tempted to borrow. Because the company used to pay strictly cash for their equipment and supplies purchases, they had no "credit track record" to speak of. Ironically, such record was on top of almost every bank's lending checklist.

Quite deliberately, Aspac proceeded to go on a "borrowing binge." When they had to acquire new tractor heads, they purchased on credit. When they needed more vans, they used credit, too. They got familiar with "credit lines" and "revolving funds" which some banks were only too happy to extend to them. Before long, they had established the credit track record they used to lack.

In 1998, when they felt they were good and ready, they filed a building construction loan with one of the largest unibanks in the country. A P9 million loan was approved promptly. And they got ready to build.

Midstream, what snagged construction was another unexpected—the Asian financial crisis. The financial sector became jumpy and cost of money soared. For Aspac, the interest rates they had begun to pay were beginning to hurt. These began at 14 percent, went up to 19 percent, climbed further to 22 percent—all in a matter of months.

Then they heard of ISSEP I. The Industrial and Support Services Expansion Program was offering a safety net for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the form of lower-than-market-rate financing. Other terms were soft as well—repayment period was long term, amounts substantial. DBP was implementing the program through a network of participating banks.

Soft terms, no fuss processing

At Plantersbank, one of DBP's retailer banks, account officer Heintji Carmona apprised David and his managers of two options on interest. They could go for a lower but "floating" rate, and thus subject to financial market movements. Or they could have the rate fixed. It did not take long for them to opt for a fixed rate—one that would give them a hedge against financial market jitters. At 14 percent it was for them better than fair

Processing the P28-million loan, Aspac finance director Evangeline Bugayong remembers, was hassle-free. DBP and Plantersbank released the check to pay off their original loan with the unibank in advance ". . . even before we produced all the documents required."

Bugayong likes the fact that she has to deal with only one account officer at Plantersbank and that the bank is steadfast with account updates and monitoring visits.

All in all, the loan package Plantersbank developed for Aspac was just what they needed.

Upbeat future

Now settled in a place of its own, Aspac International is upbeat about business prospects, regardless of the worldwide recession.

Aspac has another office and warehouse complex in Cebu and branches in strategic places in the country, including Subic Bay, Cavite, Laguna, Bataan, and Davao City.

They have a competitive edge, David thinks, and this is in the field of information technology. Internally they have developed their own worldwide tracking system, which enables them to monitor their cargo—whether carried by air or sea—24 hours a day. Not unlike FedEx, they can assure their customers of delivery within the promised timetable.

In the IT sense, Aspac is a trailblazer in the cargo forwarding business. It is not averse to sharing its IT capability with other members of the Air Cargo Forwarders Association to which it belongs.

There are other things Aspac did right.

In 1984, it joined with other freight companies—Airlift Asia, U-Freight, Airfreight Consolidators, Inc., Delgado Air Cargo and others—to engage in a co-loading arrangement. The strategic alliance resulted in economies of scale and discounts for the partners. "We used to fight each other," David recalls. "Underpricing used to be the norm." The initiative gave them the breathing space to expand and grow. The partners have found that cooperation is the way to go.

On the industry side David also talks of a partnership forged between the Aircargo Forwarders of Philippines, Inc (Afpi) with the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) in developing an online portal to enable forwarders / customs brokers as well as importers to lodge customs entries electronically. The project is expected to give the industry the capability to go e-commerce.

Today, expansion is very much in the mind of Halili and David. With their gratifying experience in borrowing, they are about ready to go for another loan if necessary—this time for a new product that will expand Aspac's capabilities: logistics hub for global distribution.

The "strictly cash" firm has learned it also makes good business sense to borrow.

For inquiries on the DBP's ISSEP program, call up the Industrial Restructuring and Research (IRR) at Tel. 867-3221 or the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Department, Tel. 815-0942 and 819-1403.

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"Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."
John 3:16

ELENA VARGAS CRUZ

of Pasig City and Pagsanjan, Laguna

Peacefully joined her Creator and her beloved husband ***Marcelo*** *on December 26, 2001 at the age of 93.*

Her bereaved children **Honorable Mayor Soledad** and **former Mayor Vicente P. Eusebio, Lolilia** and **Josefino, Zeniza, Romeo** and **Porfiria, Susana** and **Arthur, Marvin** and **Winifreda, Elsa** and **Max**; sisters **Patrocinia P. Austria** and **Amelia P. Sevilla**;

grandchildren **Arlene, Marites** and **Babar, Dr. Rowena** and **Richard, Linette** and **Clemo, Coun. Robert** and **Maribel, Richard** and **Pilar, Noel, Ryan, Marivic** and **Emir, Lailani** and **Lea, Kristina, Cecile** and **Ronald, Melissa, Michael** and **Jenny** and **Grace**;

great grandchildren **Pia, Aisha** and **Jeffrey, Danielle** and **Miggui, Frances** and **Rafaele, JM** and **Ralph, Justin**; nephews, nieces and other relatives request the pious reader to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at Capilla Aurora, Arlington East the Garden Chapels, C. Raymundo cor. Mercedes Avenue, Pasig City and will be interred on Sunday, December 30, 2001 at the Pasig Catholic Cemetery after the 1:00 p.m. Mass at the Immaculate Concepcion Parish Church.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."
Matthew 11:28

Our dearly beloved "Daddy"

APOLONIO BUAYA CALAMBA

Died in the Grace of our Lord on December 25, 2001 at the age of 63.

A good and loving husband to **Annabella Anading Calamba**, a beloved father to his only child **Ferdinand Calamba** a source of comfort and strength for his relatives and friends, but most especially for his family.

His remains lie in state at the Good Shepherd's Parish, Doña Manuela Subdivision, Las Piñas City.

Interment will be on Saturday, December 29, 2001 at the Manila Memorial Park, Parañaque City, time to be announced later. For more details, please contact Mr. Ferdinand Calamba at 874-6505 / 0916-3841087 / 0916-4851005.

MACARIO AGUILERA MEDRANO M.D.

UP-PGH MEDICINE CLASS 1934

Peacefully joined his Creator on December 24, 2001 at the age of 92.

His bereaved and loving wife **Josefa Talambiras**; children **Belinda & Francisco Medrano Jr., Bella & Rolando Reyes** (†), **Edgardo & Dr. Evelyn Villena, Drs. Albert & Carmen Santos**; grandchildren & great grandchildren; other relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie at Ibaan Evangelical Church UCCP, Ibaan, Batangas.

Interment will be on Sunday, December 30, 2001 at Ibaan Municipal Cemetery after the 3:00 p.m. Church Service.

JOSE "Jun" PREPOTENTE JR.

Passed away in Makati on December 24, 2001 at the age of 58.

His loving wife **Milagros Blascoa Prepotente** & children **Jay** and **Alma**; **Mae**; **Mitzi**; **Myra**; relatives and friends wish his eternal rest.

His body lies in state at Arlington Memorial, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City from December 29 to 30, 2001.

Interment will be at the Holy Rood Cemetery, Shoreline Washington, U.S.A.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."
John 3:16

"Lord, You know what is best for all of us, help us to be resigned to Your Will..."
Gerardine's Prayer

IN PRECIOUS MEMORY
Of an Ever-Caring and Loving Daughter,
Sister, Sister-in-Law, Tita and Lola Tita

GERARDINE V. FERAREN

December 31, 1999
on her Second Birthday in the company of the Lord

Masses will be offered at the following churches on:

Sunday, December 30, 2001	
ST. PAUL CATHEDRAL, Vigan, Ilocos, Sur	6:30 AM
Monday, December 31, 2001	
PARISH OF THE RESURRECTION, BF Homes, Parañaque	5:30, 6:30 AM, 6:30 PM
PRESENTATION OF THE CHILD JESUS, BF Homes Parañaque	6:00, 6:45 AM, 7:00 PM
ST. PAUL CATHEDRAL, Vigan, Ilocos Sur	5:00, 6:30 AM, 5:00 PM
CAMPO SANTO, Vigan, Ilocos Sur	6:00 AM
ST. PAUL COLLEGE OF MANILA, Malate, Manila	6:00 AM
SAN FELIPE NERI PARISH, Mandaluyong City	6:00 PM
ST. PETER'S CHURCH, Jersey City, New Jersey	12:05 PM
OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL, New York City, New York	9:00 AM
CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION, Boca Raton, Florida	9:00 AM
OUR LADY OF MERCY, Daly City, California	Tuesday, January 1, 2002

We lovingly remember
our beloved and thoughtful son

SAMSON MIGUEL V. FERAREN

November 30, 2001
on his 40th Day in the company of the Lord,

and also... MATILDE de VERA
February 9, 1998

We, Jesus and Natividad Feraren & Family wish to convey our heartfelt thank you to relatives and friends who expressed their condolences in countless ways and continue to keep **GERARDINE, SAMSON & MATILDE** in their prayers. God bless you all.

ANTONIO CARAM GARCIA

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord on December 22, 2001.

His bereaved wife **ALICE**, children **ANALISA, VINCENT** and **ERWIN** request the pious reader to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Arlington Memorial Chapels, 12 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Friday, December 28, 2001 at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque after the 3:00 p.m. Mass at Arlington Chapels.

FEDERICO FLORENDO PIEDAD JR.

Peacefully joined his Creator on December 26, 2001 at the age of 69.

His loving wife **LOURDES "NENE" VENTURA**; children **PINKY, ALAN** and **RINA FIDES** and **FAY**; sister **FELICITAS**; brother **DR. FERNANDO**; sister-in-law **VIOLA**; grandchildren **PAOLO, LIA** and **JOSE**; other relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the Sta. Rita Parish Church, Philam Life Homes, West Triangle, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, December 29, 2001 at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City after the 1:00 p.m. Mass.

CONCEPCION O. BARADI

of Bani, Pangasinan
Former teacher, Philippine Christian College
Alumnus, University of the Philippines
Member, YWCA and United Church of the Philippines

Peacefully joined her Creator on December 24, 2001 at the age of 97.

Her loving sister **Julia B. Casequin**; nephews, nieces, other relatives and friends request for prayers for her eternal happiness.

Her body lies in state at Sunny Hill School, 3rd Floor, AVR, 11 Capitol Hills Golf Drive, Old Balara, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Sunday, December 30, 2001 at 3 p.m. at Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City, after a 1 PM. Necrological services at the school by the United Church of the Philippines.

Capt. VICENTE R. SOLANO JR.

of Sta. Fe, Romblon and Las Piñas City

on 04 December 2001 at Port of Dakar, Eenegal, West Africa at the age of 63.

His bereaved wife **Andrea**; children **Orly, Cindy, Chona** and **Chris**; sisters, children-in-law, grandchildren, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Holy Trinity Memorial Chapels, Dr. A. Santos Ave. (Sucat Road), Parañaque City.

Interment will be on 30 December 2001, Sunday, at the Manila Memorial Park, Parañaque City at 9:00 AM.

Col. GUILLERMO P. SAZON (Ret.)

of Quezon City & San Diego, CA.

Passed away on December 22, 2001 at the age of 73.

Relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at El Camino Memorial in San Diego, CA.

Interment will be on Saturday, December 29, 2001.

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*"I am the way, the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through Me."
John 14:6*

ANTONIO R. GATUS

**Knights of Columbus Council No. 3713
Former Faithful Navigator District, Deputy and Grand Knight,
1987 Papal Awardee, Order of St. Sylvester**

Peacefully joined his Creator on Wednesday, December 26, 2001.

His bereaved wife **Basilisa**; children **Juanito, Danilo, Antonio Jr., Jeremias, James Joseph, Cyril, Emmanuel, Ma. Carmencita** and **Ma. Milagros**; daughters and sons-in-law **Estie, Marlene, Maya, Lita, Emilie, Edric** and **Yayay**, and all relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His body lies in state at the Holy Trinity Memorial Chapels, Sucat Road, Parañaque City.

Interment is scheduled for Saturday, December 29, 2001 at Manila Memorial Park in Parañaque after the 1:00 p.m. Eucharistic Celebration at St. Andrew Parish Church.

ALBINO RABELAS REPOTENTE SR.

of Novaliches and Ligao City

*Peacefully joined his Creator
on December 23, 2001 at the age of 70.*

His loving wife **LEONOR**; children and in-laws **Antonio** and **Gina**; **Flor** and **Glenn Mesias**; **Alvin** and **Liza**; **Susan**; **Jose David**; **Clara**; **Mila** and **Magoy Matibag**; **Christy** and **Mike Tadeo** and **Dominador**; grandchildren; brother **Jaime** and sister **Rita**; brothers and sisters-in-law: **Angelina, Rodolfo, Josefina (†), Adelina (†), Jose Sr., Remedios (†), Nicolas, Domingo (†), Julie, Erlinda Relacion; Jose Querol, Clemente Crisol, Rudy Cal, Connie Lawrence, Magdalena Natividad, Carmen** and **Honorio** and other relatives request the pious reader to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Chapel 1-B, Nacional Memorial Homes, G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Cremation will take place on Friday, December 28, 2001 at 9:00 a.m., Funeraria Paz along Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

"You will be forever be in our hearts Papa"

CELERINO "SECO" SIO YU SR.

of Baliuag, Bulacan

Passed away in the Grace of our Lord on December 22, 2001 at the age of 69.

His loving wife **Lina**; children **Evelyn & Hsia, Danny & Mildred, Nancy & Robert, Michael & Liza, Josephine, Christopher**; grandchildren, brothers and other relatives & friends mourn his passing away but celebrate his eternal rest with the Lord Jesus.

We request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His earthly remains lie in state at St. Augustine Parish Church, Baliuag, Bulacan.

Interment will be at Manila Memorial Park, Sta. Rita, Guiguinto, Bulacan on Saturday, December 29, 2001 at 5:00 p.m. after the 1:00 p.m. Mass at the St. Augustine Parish Church, Baliuag, Bulacan.

RUFINO S. ANTONIO JR.

*Joined his Creator at the age of 63,
December 25, 2001.*

His remains lie in state at
Christ the King Church, Greenmeadows,
Quezon City.

Interment will be on December 29, 2001 at
Heritage Park after the 12:00 o'clock Mass at
Christ the King Church, Greenmeadows,
Quezon City.

We request the pious reader to please pray for
the eternal repose of his soul.

"We know that God raised the Lord Jesus from death. He will raise us to life with Jesus. He will present us, along with you, to God."

2 Cor. 4:14

ATTY. ANTONIO P. LOPEZ, SR.

of Lingayen, Pangasinan

*Peacefully joined his Creator
on December 23, 2001 at the age of 76.*

KUYA TONY is survived by his children **ANNA LIZA & RODRIGO ANGELO, ANTONIO II, MARY PRECIOUS, & JESS RAYMUND**; his siblings **VIRGINIA, ELENA, MODESTO, TOMAS, TERESITA, MANUEL, LEOCADIO & JOSELITO**; his grandchildren, relatives and friends. He joins his wife **ELIZABETH**, in the grace of eternal peace and everlasting life.

His remains lie in state at Arlington Memorial Chapels, Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, December 29, 2001 at the Eternal Gardens after the 7:00 a.m. Mass.

Our Dearly Beloved

FLORENCIO BALTAZAR MALOCO

of Dumangas, Iloilo and P. Diasnes St., 7th Avenue, Caloocan City

Peacefully joined his Creator on December 24, 2001 at the age of 86.

His loving wife **Judith**; children **Erlinda, Romeo, Renina** and **Grace**; children-in-law **Joe Cariño, Rosa Maloco, Boy Docto** and **Som Paquiz**; sister **Estelita Tupaz**; grandchildren and great grandchildren, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

Presently his remains lie in state at the Chapel of Don Enrique Heights, Brgy. Holy Spirit, Capitol Hills, Quezon City and will be transferred by the afternoon of December 29, 2001 to Funeraria Paz, G. Araneta Avenue cor. Kaliraya St., Quezon City.

Date of cremation will be known through Tel. Nos. 931-3089, 658-5662, 0917-5291854 and 0919-2755689.

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BUSINESS *Friday*

MARGIE QUIMPO-ESPINO, Business Features Editor

Cash firm learns lessons in building credit track record

BY MYRNA RODRIGUEZ-CO

FOR almost a decade, Aspac International, Inc. has been running a flourishing business in cargo forwarding on leased premises at Columbia Air Freight Complex II along Ninoy Aquino Avenue, right smack on the "aviation belt" at Parañaque City.

The area was a two-door facility—a 700 sq. m. office and a 4,000 sq. m. warehouse which the company rented for almost half a million pesos monthly.

Today, Aspac occupies a spanking new two-story building on a 4,000 sq. m. lot at Multinational Village on Kaingin Road, a few hundred meters away from its former leased premises.

The building, sprawling on what used to be low-lying salt fields near Manila Bay, was designed and built to very precise specifications, according to Meynard Halili, Aspac chair.

Before the first beam was put up, all the managers sat down with the architect to make sure that the structure to be put up would harmonize with the company's vision and ease its work flow.

The outcome is a place that has privacy, access among various offices and divisions, and space in which to think, be creative, interact and grow. Downstairs is operations; upstairs are the executive offices, accounting and sales. The lobby is spacious, modern, almost hotel-like in ambience, but welcoming. A metal stairway provides striking contrast to the glass and concrete interiors. Halili thinks the building is reflective of the light industrial sector to which Aspac belongs.

Most of all, Halili beams, the building is now their own. "Thanks to Planters Development Bank and a 'financing plus' program of the Development Bank of the Philippines."

According to Monico David, Aspac president, he came to realize that as the rental escalated year after year, it made good economic sense for the company to build its own "home" even if it meant amortizing the property with a financing institution.

"The amortization payments couldn't be too much more than what we were then already spending in monthly rental," David exclaims.

However; finding the right bank and lending program was easier said than done.

They could not have known, for example, that Aspac's conservative financial policy would work against them when they first at-

CASH/ B5

Entertain customers instead of shouting hard sell at them

BY ROGER PE

WHEN times are bad, the first thing that gets chopped is the budget for advertising.

Marketing people either hold back their spending or adopt a wait-and-see attitude. The doomsayers would wield their shining axes and proclaim—"let's totally strike it off the list."

The act they do adversely affects several sectors, in particular, service-oriented shops—production suppliers, publication houses, photographers, casting agencies and a whole slew of others who depend on advertising for their businesses. Little do the pall-of-gloom bearers know that they may be cutting off their brand consciousness among consumers and may be creating a worse downturn.

Time and again we witness "hard sell" approaches dominating the media. The industry seems to believe that the more you yell at the consumers, the more they will buy your products. But the more you look cheap, the more you yell, the more you become second class and the less consumers will like you.

Tough times call for tough measures. Marketing men should be more relevant but be courageous and distinctive. They should entertain consumers instead of shouting at them.

Breeze through the newspapers and we see so much wasted advertising because they are inconsequential and do not appeal to anyone. They should break new grounds instead of playing it safe, use old and new media in new and unexpected ways. Then, they should really start to see the sales move.

Easier said than done? Look at it from a brighter side.

Ray Dempsey, managing director and area manager of McCann-Erickson, says: "We are cautious but optimistic about 2002 for McCann. Strong fundamental quality is what McCann is all about and that shines through during difficult times. Our clients are blue chip, long term players. They understand the opportunity to gain market share during downturns. And McCann, likewise, will gain share on our competitors."

Studies show that brands which slow down on advertising during economic downturns are perceived to be of low quality. According to an agency strategy planner, "they're like husbands who marry their wives and then leave them."

A managing director of an Asia Pacific agency tells clients about the importance of marketing assertively in such times. He tells clients that recession is a time to steal a march on their competitors.

That winners, like car race drivers, are the ones who put their feet on the gas when they pass a crash while others ease off. He then adds: Protect your agency stars regardless of seniority, drop less than stellar talents in your agency regardless of seniority, talents are more important than business class seats and Christmas parties, and hire any excellent talent released by your competitor.

As business gets tighter, clients and agencies must realize that the mediocre won't survive. They must look within and ask the following: Do you want to be a big player in the market? Do you want a consistent branding in the psyche of of your target? Do you want to be taken seriously and be noted for quality and topnotch service? It would be wise to think twice before you raise the machete on advertising.

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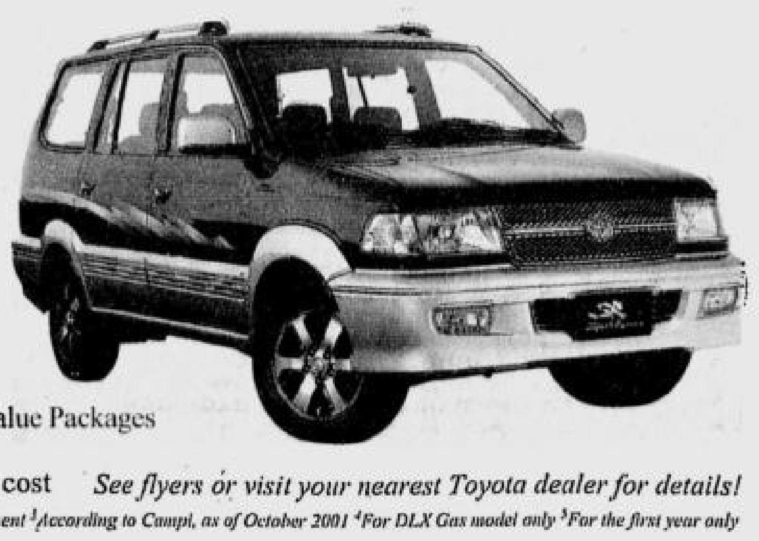

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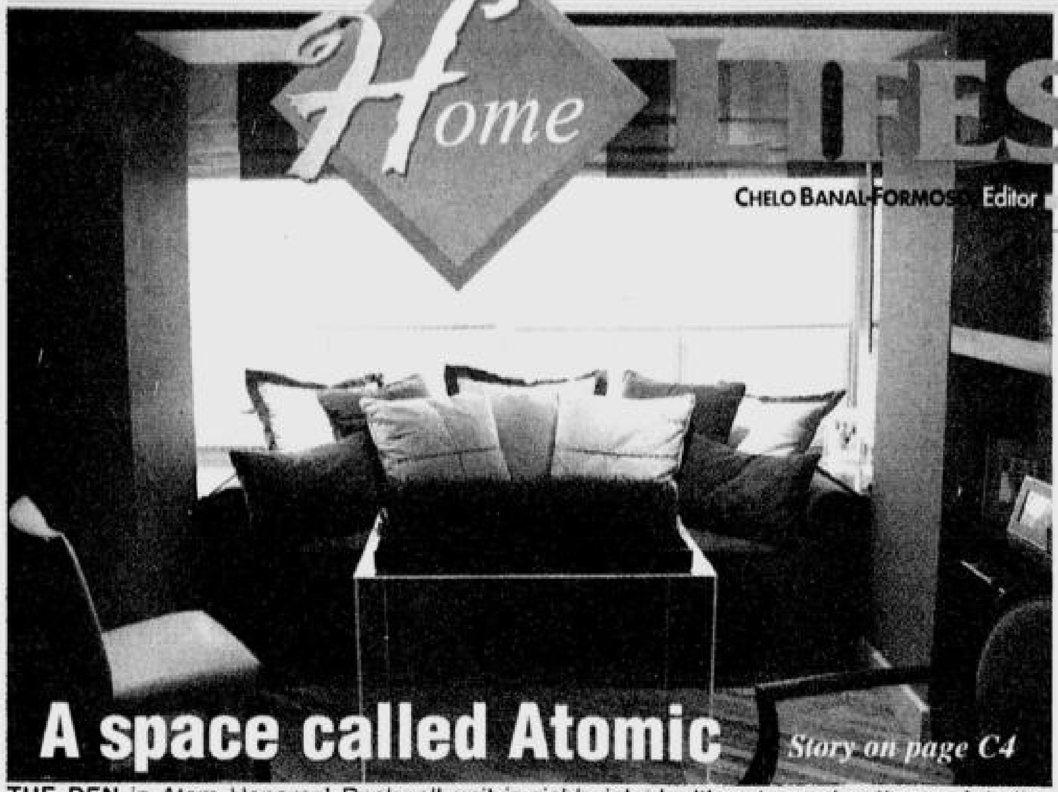
Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4174, Series of 2001

Home LIFESTYLE Trend Spotting

CHELO BANAL-FORMOSO, Editor ■ MARGE C. ENRIQUEZ, Subsection Editor

FOR FEEDBACK, TEXT US AT (0919) 661-2337 OR E-MAIL US AT LIFESTYLE@INQUIRER.COM.PH



A space called Atomic

Story on page C4

THE DEN in Atom Henares' Rockwell unit is richly inlaid with color and patterns. A built-in sofa bed provides a lap of luxury in this room filled with shelves for CDs, books and audio collections. It will be a den-cum-office setup that will cater to Atom's sensible, examined and balanced life.

Alexander the Chaste

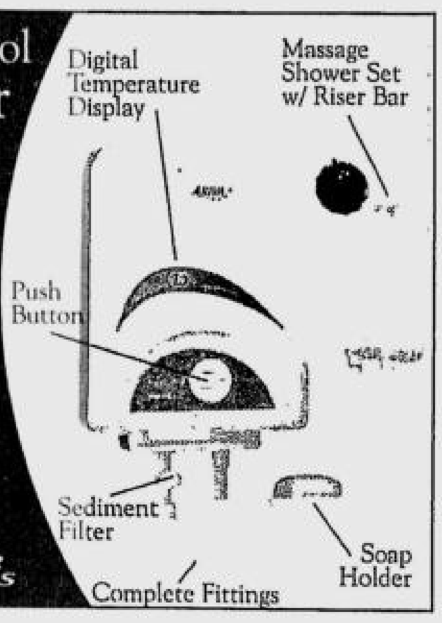
MR. INTERNATIONAL Alex Aquino is flanked by second runner-up Leroy Vissers of the Netherlands and first runner-up Anibal Martigani of Venezuela.

Story on page C2

ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

Alone is not necessarily lonely

Story on page C3



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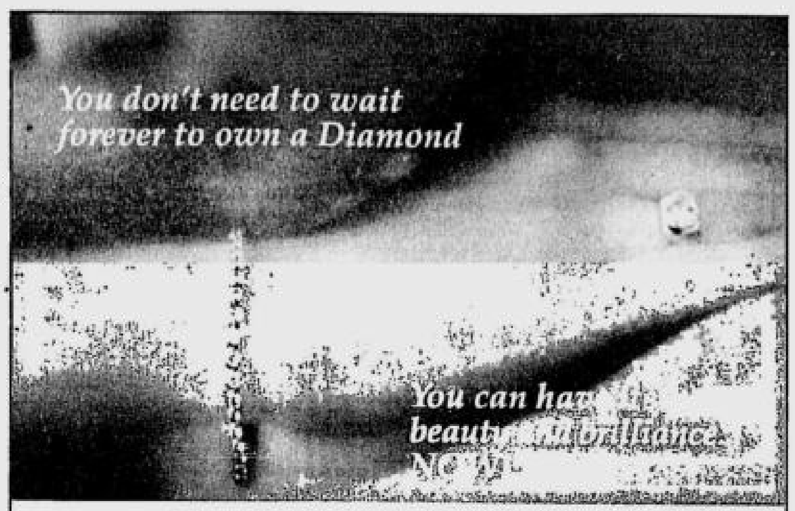
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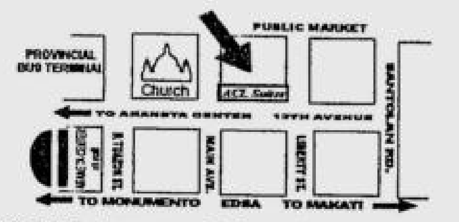

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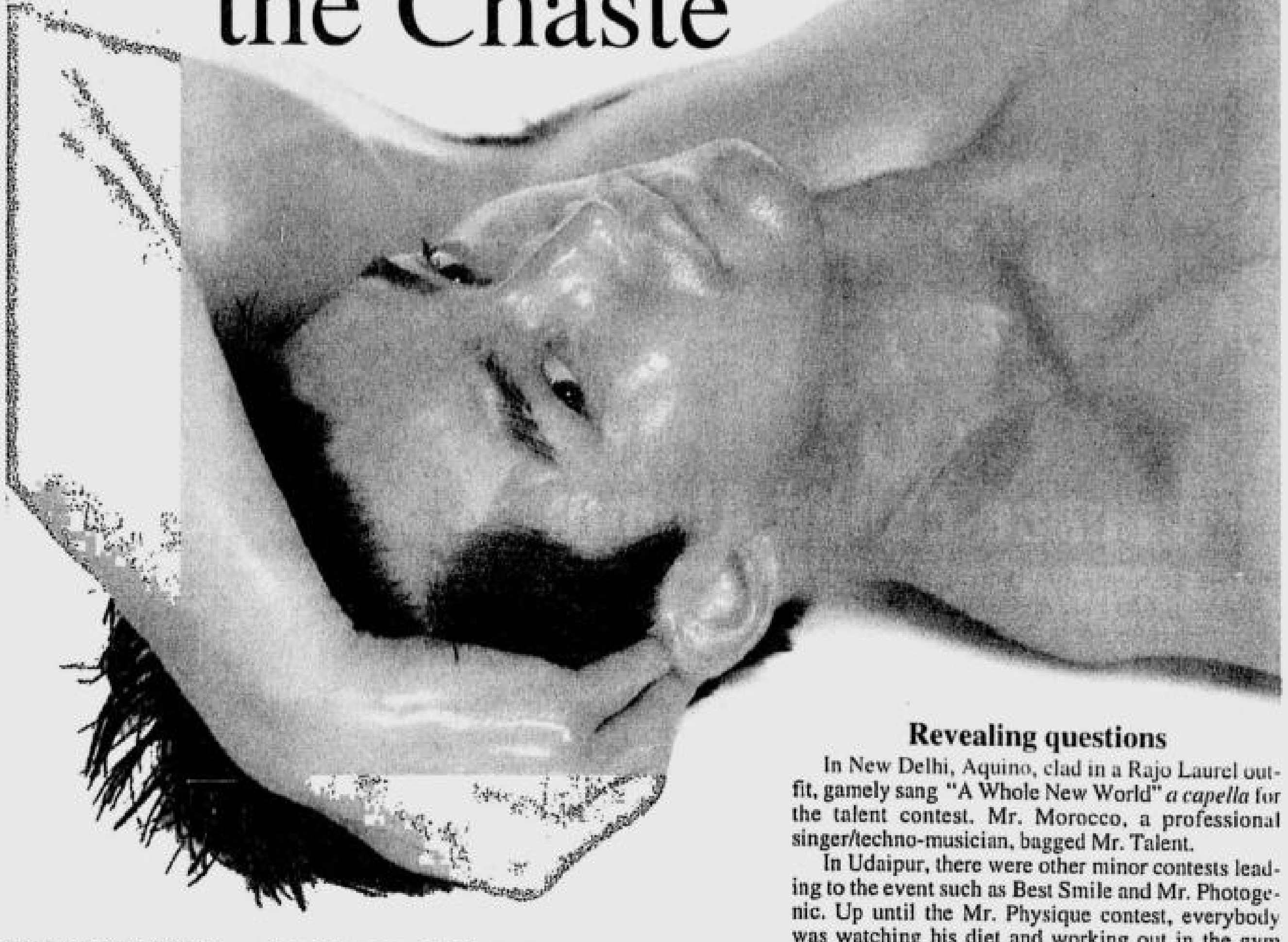
Alexander the Chaste

In a sea of pretenders, interlopers and lechers, Alex Aquino, Mr. International 2001, is a refreshing presence with his good looks and pure soul



PHOTOGRAPHED by Jun de Leon in the book "Patrick Rosas Images"

By Marge C. Enriquez

AT THE NIGHT of the Mr. International pageant in Udaipur, Rajasthan, India, Indian novelist Shoba De posed a challenging question to Philippine candidate Alexander Aquino.

"Women who join beauty contests are usually labeled as bimbos or not intelligent. What would name a male entering a men's pageant?"

"A risk-taker," replied Aquino. He added that it actually took confidence and security for a man to be involved in an activity that required more personality and sensitivity rather than brawns.

That best describes Aquino, the *balikbayan* who took a risk to spend seven months away from his home, the United States, to shift careers from marketing to modeling.

The good news is that the Philippines has finally won an international title after a dry spell of 20 years. What's unusual is that not only is the winner a male, but he won for his personality and integrity.

True self

Aquino said that having only one winner over 35 candidates was one of the toughest things about the contest. "There were so many guys that I thought would win. I didn't really count myself as winning. A lot of the contest was about character," he explained.

The winner was chosen not because he was the handsomest or the strongest. The judges were looking for someone who struck people as the natural unfolding of the best that lay within himself.

But without them knowing it, Aquino was a cut above the rest because of his chastity, a virtue in this era of permissiveness and sexual obsession. Religious nut, he is not. To Aquino, it's a way of finding one's true self and asserting his individuality.

"I liked the competition because a person wasn't judged purely on his image unlike the Best Model Search. That's why there were lots of the question and answer. The judges saw the character inside and outside. They saw a balance. They saw through me. That was what I had hoped for. I always try not to delve into the image part of it all. Because image is a dime a dozen," said Aquino.

"I went into the contest just being myself. If you're just yourself, your true self, that's all that really matters. Other guys try to play the game in the contest. They try to be *chika chika* with the director. I wanted them to see me for who I am. I'm not like 'I'm Mr. So and So. I have done all these great things.'"

Fluke

Aquino was born on Dec. 6, 1971 and was raised in California. His father, Rogelio Aquino, is a computer analyst. His mother, Teresa Sullivan, is an Irish-Korean. Aquino moved to Seattle to work in the corporate world, doing marketing and sales and business development with dotcom companies.

His career shift started out as a fluke. Joining the contest was also a fluke. On his first week of vacation in Manila last May, an agent discovered him. The next week he got a booking for Cosmopolitan Magazine. Celebrity makeup artist Patrick Rosas spotted Aquino and asked him to be part of his book "Images" and do a sitting for photographer Jun de Leon. Director Robby Carmona hired him in his fashion shows and eventually befriended the *balikbayan*.

Aquino finds it strange that every time he fills his arrival card, he writes "model" as his occupation.

"It's like saying 'slacker,'" he chuckled. "I'm enjoying it. I know it's only temporary. For now I'm going to ride the waves."

Aquino may be idolized in the social scene but behind the glamour, he's just a regular guy who has to fend for himself. In the seven months that he has been away from the States, he has done four commercials and several pictorials. After Sept. 11, advertising budgets dropped and he had to work double time.

Even if Aquino won the hearts of judges for his candor and wit, he's got killer looks. When I first met him for a fashion pictorial with Marden Iglesias, my fever vanished. He had well-chiseled Eurasian features—almond eyes, a slender nose, sculpted cheekbones and a trim build.

His attractiveness was far from physical, but it made an immediate, inspiring impression.

"His aura is different when you talk to him," said Carmona.

On another occasion, I shared with him my travel experiences, especially my trips to India. Little did we know that he would be joining an international contest there.

Aquino's participation in the Mr. International was a last-minute decision. Carmona, the national director of the Mr. International pageant, was given short notice to send a candidate. Although Aquino had an American passport, he was still qualified because of his Filipino parentage. The visa was filed and collected the same day. The local organizers got Aquino's wardrobe from Nono Palmos, the *barong* from Michaelangelo Afable, casual and party clothes from Rajo Laurel.

Revealing questions

In New Delhi, Aquino, clad in a Rajo Laurel outfit, gamely sang "A Whole New World" *a capella* for the talent contest. Mr. Morocco, a professional singer/techno-musician, bagged Mr. Talent.

In Udaipur, there were other minor contests leading to the event such as Best Smile and Mr. Photogenic. Up until the Mr. Physique contest, everybody was watching his diet and working out in the gym every day. Even Aquino eschewed carbohydrates. Mr. Iceland, 21, who's 6'3", weighs 195 lbs and has 8 percent body fat,won the title.

There was more weight in the pre-judging where contestants were deluged with questions on their personalities.

A judge asked him, "If you could ask me a question, what would it be?"

Aquino waxed philosophical, "I said, 'If you were in my shoes, what would you be thinking right now?' She got kinda stumped."

This question typically asked in the subcontinent was: what are you going to take home from India? Aquino answered, "Hospitality. The people are warm."

How would he describe himself in one word?

"Transparent," said Aquino. "What you see is what you get."

On three colors that would best illustrate his character, Aquino cited black, white and blue. "Black goes with everything. I get along with anybody. White—I keep a wholesome image. Blue is my favorite color. It's calming."

Unlike other contestants who sought to impress in the pre-judging, Aquino's only intention was to be friendly and outgoing.

The common question that would seal the fate of the finalists during the pageant night was simple: "If you were on the moon, looking on the earth, what would you focus on?"

Aquino's answer was a no-brainer. Aside from looking at his birthplace he would set his sights on the beautiful city of Udaipur.

The audience was naturally flattered. Aquino said he didn't want to be too serious about his answers. When his name was announced as the winner, Aquino was stunned.

"I was shocked. I was like 'No way, are you kidding me?' They gave me the trophy and sash," he said.

After the rites, Alex called his parents to tell them the good news. Then he flew to Bombay to meet the owners of the corporation. The rest of the week was filled with TV interviews and pictorials.

Not gay

Last Friday, as soon as Aquino landed in Manila at 8:30 p.m. he was brought to a restaurant in Libis for an interview with the INQUIRER. He had to catch an early morning flight to the States the following day.

Aquino allowed himself to enjoy simple pleasures after a month of dietary restrictions. He had a plate of French fries topped with cheese and bacon bits.

"After the show, I almost pigged out," he said.

No, Alex, you'll need all those calories for ribbon-cutting ceremonies, I joked.

Because of his hectic schedule that week, there was no time to pump iron.

"I haven't had a workout for a week and a half. I'm beginning to feel fat," he said.

This writer teased him by saying he was vainer than a woman.

"You know, we're risk-takers," he quipped.

Aquino said his responsibilities as Mr. International haven't been defined to him yet. At this writing he is spending the holidays with his family in the States. Plans are afoot to return to Asia for modeling. He also hopes that he would get bigger representation in the United States. Hopefully with the Mr. International title, he would get endorsements in the Philippines.

Does he get swell-headed when people tell him he's drop-dead gorgeous?

"No, it kinda depends on what they see. I see my weaknesses and insecurities," he said.

Like what?

"No comment," he said. "I'm a perfectionist" In a field dominated by women and homosexuals, Aquino knew that being tagged as a sissy or gay came with the territory.

"They think you're gay; they've heard you're gay or know you're gay or whatever," he cleared his throat.

"I know myself and what I am inside. And what's true to me that I'm not gay," he laughed. "I'm not going to spend my life convincing you. I can't please everybody. So I do my thing and not worry about that."

Biggest temptation

Aquino attributes his inner strength to being a Christian. Occasionally, he joins his cousin's group, Metro Manila Christian Church, for fellowship. His interest in spirituality began at the age of 16 when he began to seek a better understanding of God.

"It has helped me become stable. This industry is crazy. It's the uncertainty of what or may not happen. Not having a paycheck coming every week that you know you can count on. You're may have money next month. Sometimes the pay is not much compared with the dotcom world," he explained.

"The biggest temptation for me has been not knowing. I have to plan week from today or a month. In this industry you can't do that. A lot of you're struggling is with God's timing and having patience and not doubting and having faith about

ALEXANDER/p.C7

HenySison

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

January 5 (Saturday) 9:00-1:00 p.m. P1,200 BASIC CAKES & ICINGS FOR BEGINNERS by: Heny Sison "Buttercake with Butter Icing, Moist Chocolate Cake with Fudge Frosting, Mocha Cake with No-Melt Butter Icing, Lemon Chiffon Cake with Boiled Icing and Sponge Cake with Whipped Cream Icing

January 5 (Saturday) 2:00-6:00 p.m. P1,200 BROWNIES & BARS by: Heny Sison "Chewy Moist Brownies, Carrot Cake Bars with Cream Cheese Icing, Lemon Cheesecake Bars, Brownies with Caramel Center and Butterscotch Bars

January 7 (Monday) 9:00-4:00 p.m. P1,500 SMALL BREADS I by: Heny Sison "Breadstick, Cinnamon Roll with Cream Cheese Icing Topping, Bagels, London Scones, Butterscotch Pretzel & Pita Bread

January 8 (Tuesday) 9:00-3:00 p.m P1,500 ITALIAN DESSERTS by: Heny Sison "Tiramisu, Budino Nero, Panna Cotta con Caramello, La Torta Di Mandorle Di Capri & Panforte Senese & Pere al Fomo (Spiced Baked Pears)

BASIC TECHNIQUES OF COOKING by: Jill Sandique, Chef-Food Consultant & Food Stylist, Blue Ribbon graduate of Peter Kump's New York Cooking School "Master fundamental culinary skills like sauteeing, braising and poaching, and you'll approach any cooking task or cuisine with confidence and pleasure. This course works for cooks at every level of skill and aspiration. For beginners and for those who want to go back to the basics, it's the first place to start

LESSON I - January 9 (Wednesday) 9:00-12:00 p.m. P1,500

LESSON II - January 10 (Thursday) 9:00-12:30 p.m. P1,500

LESSON III - January 31 (Wednesday) 9:00-12:30 p.m. P1,500

LESSON IV - February 1 (Thursday) 9:00-12:30 p.m. P1,500

January 8 (Wednesday) 1:30-4:00 p.m. P1,200 COFFEE! COFFEE! COFFEE! by: Aileen Anastacio, owner of C'est Si Bon and Goodies N' Sweets, graduate of culinary at the California Culinary Academy "If you are planning to open a coffee shop this course is for you. Learn the four fundamentals of coffee brewing, home espresso, guide to steaming & foaming. Recipes: Caffé Latte, Caffé Mocha, Caffé Americano, Cappuccino, Espresso Macchiato and Espresso con Panna. Make fun toppings and garnishes and master the art of coffee making.

January 10 (Thursday) 1:30-4:00 p.m. P1,200 DESSERT COFFEES by: Aileen Anastacio "Learn how to make a variety of iced coffee drinks; a whole new category of ways to enjoy espresso: Recipes: Almond Coffee Freeze, Icy Rum Coffee Cream, Toffee Coffee, Mudslide Malt, Mocha Rumba, Rocky Road, Mocha Malt and more!

January 11 (Friday) 9:30-4:00 p.m. P1,200 CLASSIC & CONTEMPORARY PASTRIES I by: Jill Sandique "Chocolate Pecan Tart, Linzertorte, Breton, Black Walnut Cake and Opera Torte

January 12 (Saturday) 9:00-4:00 p.m. P1,200 BAKING II by: Heny Sison "Ube Butter Cake, Sour Cream Pound Cake, Walnut Pie, Cheesecake Tart, Crema de Fruta and Ensaymada

January 14-18; 21-25 (Mon-Friday) 9:00-4:00 p.m. P9,000 MASTER IN CAKE DECORATION/BASIC by: Heny Sison "A two week practical basic cake decorating designed for shop owner, teacher, baker, chef and enthusiast. Includes fancy borders, over 20 icing flowers, color flow, method of printing and scrpt, sugar molding, flower bunching, figure piping, decorated cookies, birthday & wedding cake assembly. Full participation.

January 19 (Saturday) 9:30-4:00 p.m. P2,000 BASIC FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS by: Glenn Remorca, floral designer "Learn the theories, styles, trends, techniques, sourcing, flower care & maintenance, basic forms, arrangements and flowers for wedding. Lecture, demonstration and hands-on production. Bring a pair of scissors.

January 26 (Saturday) 9:30-4:00 p.m. P1,500 CREPE WORKSHOP by: Jill Sandique "Learn the techniques of crepe making in this full participation class. On the menu Crepe Suzette, Strawberry Crepe, Mango-Pandan Crepe, Crepe a la Mode, Spinach Roulade, Beggars Purses and Chicken Mushroom Crepe

January 28 (Monday) 9:00-4:00 p.m. P1,200 NO-BAKED CHEESECAKES by: Heny Sison "Festive Irish Cream, Rocky Road, Very Blueberry, Creamy Chilled, Very Smooth, Tropical & Mango Cheesecake

January 29 (Tuesday) 9:00-4:00 p.m. P1,500 PARADE OF PIES, TARTS & CHEESECAKES by: Heny Sison "French Apple Pie with Streusel Topping and Crème Anglaise Sauce, Turtle Pie, Banana Cream Pie with Caramel Topping, Mango Tart, Peach Walnut Pie, Blueberry Cheese and White Chocolate Cheesecake

January 30 (Wednesday) 9:00-1:00 p.m. P1,200 CAKE ART SPECIALTIES I by: Jill Sandique "Big Jacks, Mango Bars, Glazed Dark Chocolate Cake with Caramel Sauce, Pavlova, Pecan Pie Bars and Chocolate Silk

January 30 (Wednesday) 1:30-4:00 p.m. P1,500 BAKED PASTAS by: Aileen Anastacio "Beef Lasagna, Vegetable Lasagna, Chicken Macaroni, Baked Spaghetti & Baked Seafood Pasta

January 31 (Thursday) 1:30-5:00 p.m. P1,500 PASTA GALORE by: Aileen Anastacio "Learn all-time favorites pasta dishes. Recipes. Pasta Puttanesca, Pasta Carbonara, Spaghetti with Meatballs Seafood Pasta with Tomato Cream and Vongole

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Alone is not necessarily lonely

By Jose Javier Reyes
Contributor

SO we have taken down the Christmas tree, the décor carefully wrapped and catalogued inside storage boxes where it will stay until the next holiday season. Some are happy that Christmas is finally over. We look at the mirror and guess how many pounds we have gained because the temptation to pig out was too great to resist, and think about the ordeal we will have to go through to get rid of unwanted inches.

The trappings of the Yuletide Season do not necessarily mean a spontaneous outburst of joy. Some people dread the sight of Christmas décor being set out for sale at department stores or even hearing "Kumukutikutitap" as Muzak. Christmas can be put side by side with such traditional annual events as Valentine. Both are major commercial holidays and share the universal rule that you have to give love and be loved.

Christmas Eve is very different from New Year's Eve. Well, yes—everything turns saccharine and sonorous when the family gathers around the dining table overflowing with Media Noche goodies: you develop an uncontrollable compulsion to kiss every relative present and dish out greeting card lines. Christmas makes you want to sprout wings and fall on your knees to implore the heavens for world peace. New Year is not like that at all.

To mark the end of a year gone by (thank God!) and welcome yet another year of one's life (please, God!), you invade Bocaue or Meycauayan for the loudest, most effective instruments for shattering your eardrums and traumatizing the dogs in your neighborhood. People want and have to get drunk on New Year's Eve. It is as if the only way to get rid of the memories of the past 365 days is to be intoxicated to the point of lunacy in welcoming the next 12 months.

Full of excess

There is a lot of hugging, kissing, "Auld Lang Syne"-ing, shouting and pawing, all due to overindulgence in alcohol or simply uncontrollable euphoria to the point of being in a trance-like state. Unlike Christmas wherein everybody reminisces, New Year's Eve is full of excess and adventures requiring sheer guts.

I remember that not-so-historic transition from 1999 to year 2000 when I found myself outside Giraffe. I was practically crushed by so many hugs and kisses that I came home smelling like I have been bathed in slobbering love. If I were in a high-fertility mode, I might have conceived without knowing who the father of the child was or even the very mode of conception. I am not even sure if that incident really happened. Everything remains a blur. But I would like to think that something close to what I somewhat remember took place and my memories were not merely the effect of mixing drinks too early that evening.

Occasions like that New Year's Eve are among the few times I am glad I am single. My outrageous behavior that night would have warranted official reprimand if I were going around pretending to be a responsible parent or a model Filipino citizen.

Well, yes, Christmas can be quite a downer not only because you usually end up close to bankruptcy. This year, I was trapped in my house, plugged into the Net with another single friend who lives alone in Berkeley Hills. She also chose to stay at home and watch pay-per-view television. So there we were conversing in real time using the MS Messenger. We tried to analyze this whole depression bit that affects single people who don't have a platoon of relatives to devour the Adelaida's *hamon* Tsina or throw the Marca Pato *queso de bola* like it were a basketball during the final match of the PBA.

Home alone

After all the gifts have been distributed and after the family reunions, you come home alone and examine your existence vis-à-vis the 14-ft-tall Christmas tree that looks like a flaming bush in the middle of the living room. You savor the haunting silence. By this time you are tired—very, very tired—of answering the same queries from your relatives, exhausted from the frenetic preparations from shopping to disentangling Scotch tape from your fingers to those tedious Kris Kringles and oily food that mark Christmas parties. You worry about January which means paying your real estate tax and whatever payments are due. Your bank account now looks like the Philippine budget deficit.

ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

You are so tired of trying very, very hard to be very, very happy by counting all your blessings, including your godchildren who you see only *once* a year. You want to be alone.

Somehow, despite all arguments, it's not so bad being alone for a while. I know of some mothers-cum-housewives who suppress the urge to have a delicious nervous breakdown around this time of year. This is because the poor female of the species still has to wash the pots and pans, dress her kids in their Christmas best and try to look like Martha Stewart in front of the attacking clan. Christmas may be all about loving, sharing, giving and all that brotherhood of man stuff but all that can be so draining.

Vicious is better

Maybe that's why I like the viciousness of New Year better. For so many eves now, we, the singletons, would gather in the apartment of Manny Castañeda who, for almost two days would cook up a storm for the Year-End *lamunan*. Manny is a wonderful cook; he has mastered a number of dishes that he serves every year. You know it's New Year's Eve because you see the same dishes elegantly served on my friend's table. And each time we asked, "*Bakit 'yan na naman ang ulam?*" he would reply, "Those are traditional dishes." I would bring the wine, our Chinese friend George would bring cold cuts from Ongpin (although he is usually the last to arrive) and Don Escudero would critique Manny's cooking, how it has improved or regressed compared to the previous year's presentation.

The same six to eight people (together with Manny's family) would lock arms and bid the old year goodbye with fierce conviction that the next one would be better. Then after the explosions have died down, we would shuffle out of South Syquia and go somewhere, turning completely pagan in our determination to spend the first few hours of the New Year zonked out of our brains or in somnambulist bliss. We crawl back to our cars and regain consciousness past noon the next day, not really knowing what happened between 12:01 a.m. and that exact millisecond of re-entering the world.

Now try acting like this if you have children! Try explaining to your darlings why you were practically frothing in the mouth the night before or, worse, why you have confetti on your tongue, you speak in very slurred syllables, and try to avoid sunlight like you are a vampire.

Somehow, you are exuberant in your single-blessedness during the New Year. You savor the abandonment, you relish the bacchanalian qualities. You brace yourself for the big hangover—not from the amount of alcohol you drink but the realization that the holidays are over. As much as you dread its arrival every year, at whatever age you are in, you feel sad when it is over.

Alone and alive

No one should feel alone and no one is really alone during the New Year even if there is no specific individual sharing your bathroom.

Stephen Sondheim says that "Alone is alone and not alive..." I dare to disagree. I have seen people endure their supposed eternal partnerships in a state of living death. I have heard too many tales of people struggling to find some significance in another to the point of surrendering their identities and turning into emotional zombies, mapping out their lives based on the course of their relationships. Been there, done that. I know how great it can feel—and I also know how *awful* it can get.

I console my friend in Berkeley by saying that, if single-blessedness should be our life-long calling, then we should not complain or merely accept this state with resignation. If you end up being alone, not necessarily by choice but by circumstance, then there must be a purpose. You only have to seek the fun part of it. You do not even have to rationalize or go around explaining to people why you opted for a *soltero* existence. Sometimes, the fear of being alone during Christmas can push you into mutant relationships that bring more troubles rather than stability to your existence.

And, believe me, a really good book, a really terrific film, even a hobby like cross-stitching or making papier toilles can be more enriching than a downright awful human involvement. Moreover, no money or dignity is involved in playing a game of solitaire. It is only a game to pass the time away.

In the meantime, as I continue to bask in my single bliss, I will put aside all the worries about Valentine which is just around the corner. I mean, what is Valentine anyway? It is just a day when the price of a bouquet of roses kazooms to the stratosphere just so that people can prove their undying love for another. *Puh-leeeze.*

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MARCH 22, 2002
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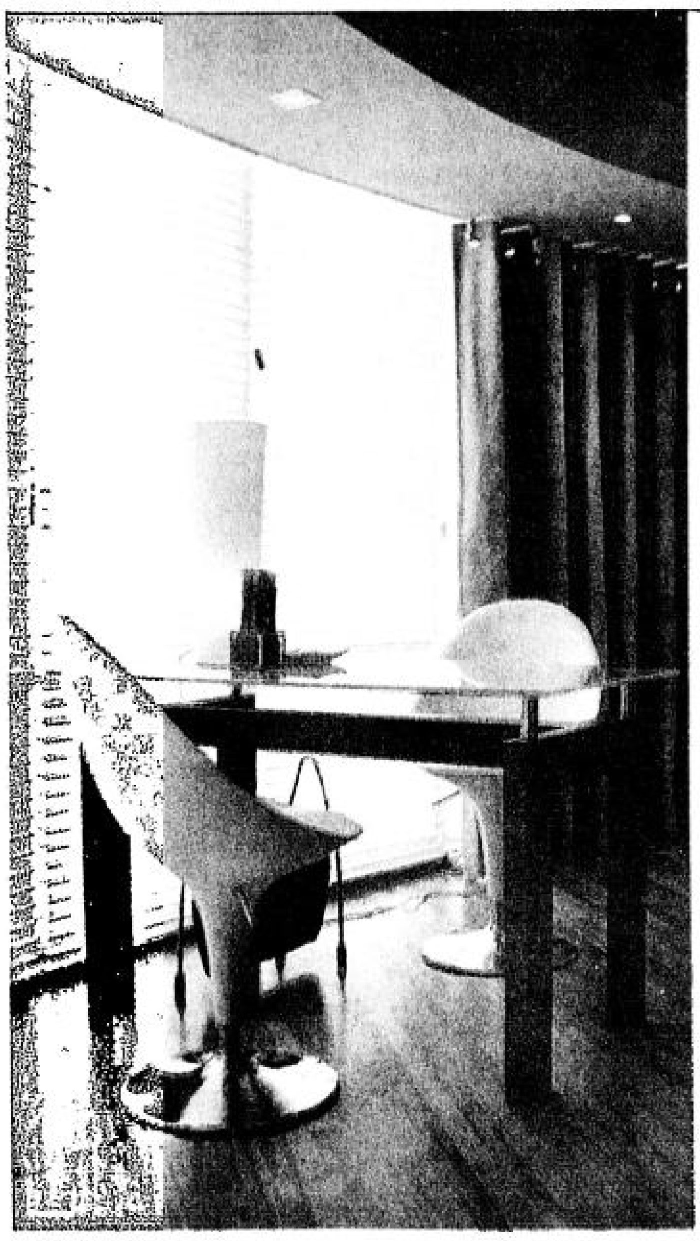
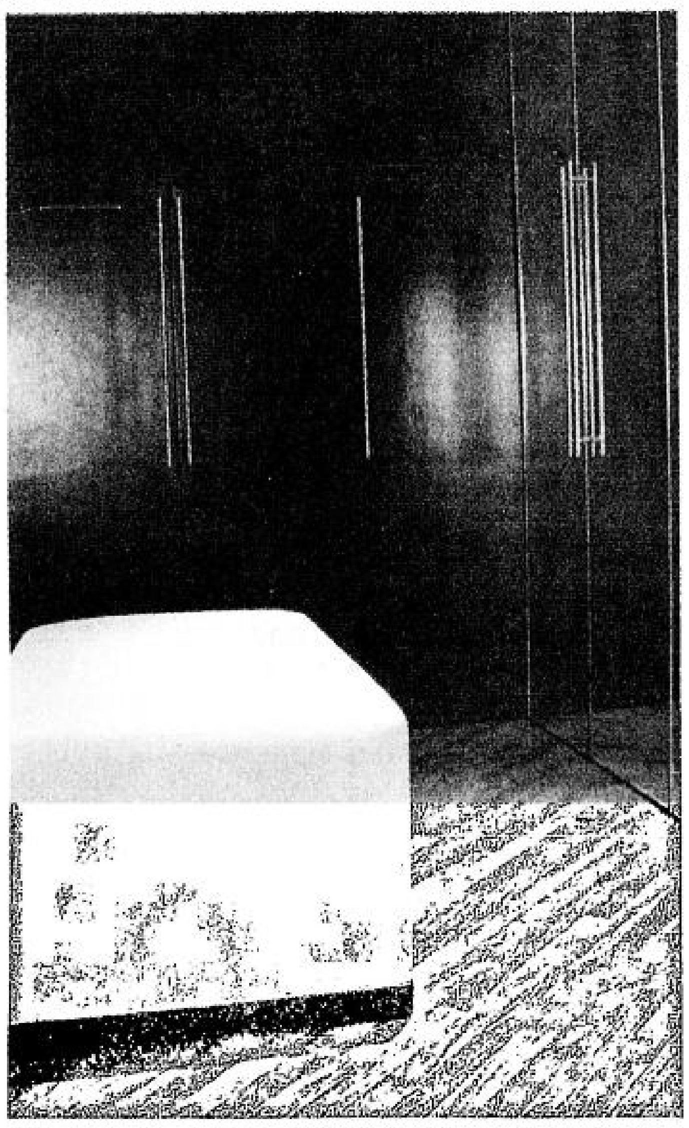
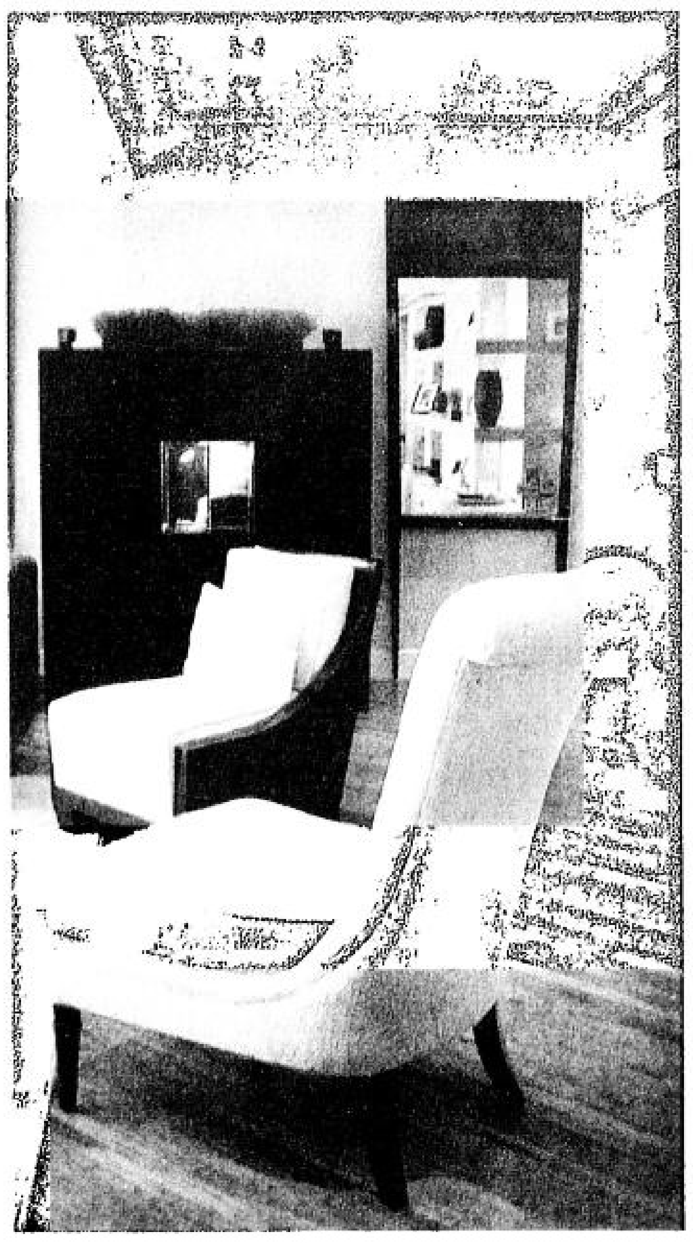


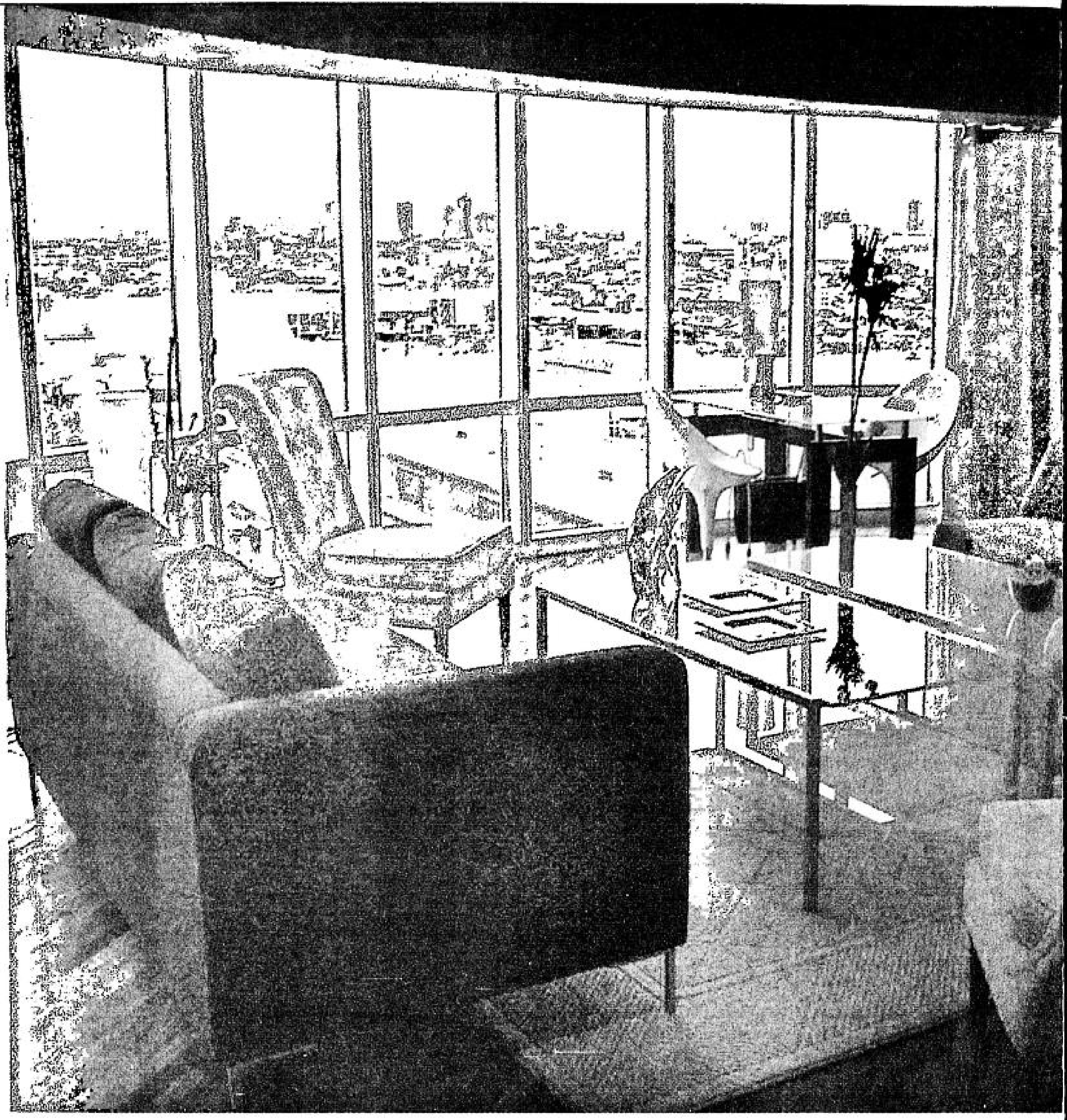
THE SILHOUETTE blinds hide the view of Manila beyond.



THE FORMS are familiar—clean, distinct and linear amid the richness of wooden floor and beige walls.



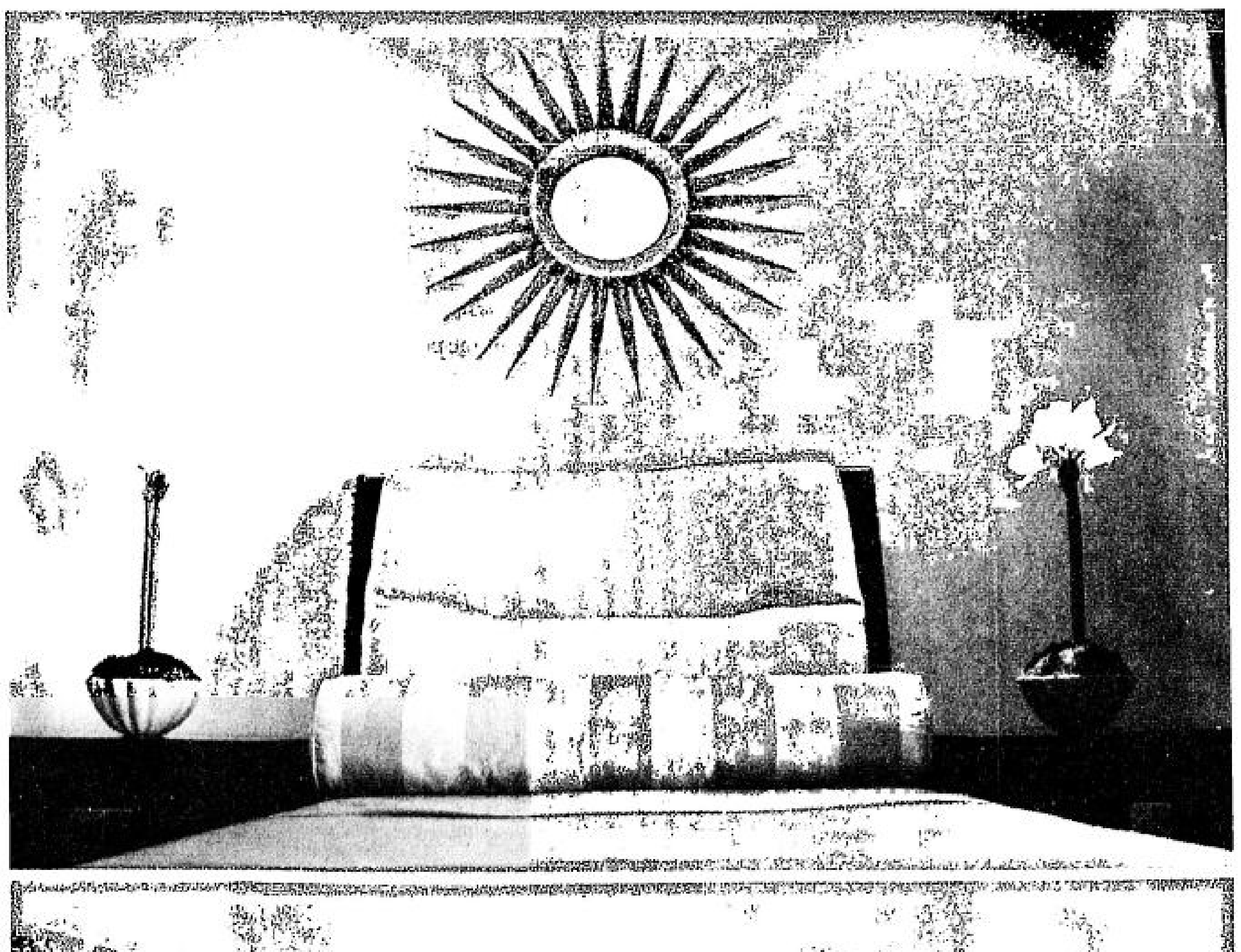
THE SHAPES are graceful and curvilinear in some areas and altogether sleek and straight on certain spots.



POWER vista is obtained within the intimate and dynamic Rockwell community.

A space called A T O

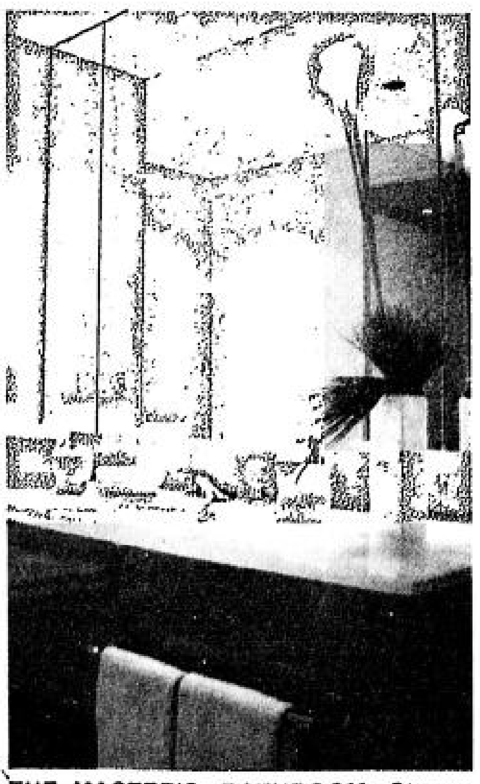
THE ALMARIO touch is gained with full control of a spa experience mimicked in this cozy bedroom. Bursting with the splendor of silk, flowers and cushions.



MADE-TO-ORDER are the cabinets and bedroom furnishing, accommodating an energetic man's needs for recharging and grateful hours of sleep. Breakfast in bed? The entertainment cabinet in front will enhance lazy Sunday mornings. Cabinets flanking the master's bed are built-in, too. More Armani colors are merged with the lilting influences of Milanese forms and Asian lines.

MIC

For broadcast mogul Atom Henares, the Almario sisters have provided a cradle that rocks and excites, a nest that lifts and balances an energetic man's life



THE MASTER'S BATHROOM. Glass floats on slabs of synthetic granite, lending an air of majesty and practicality to a room flooded with plush comfort and style. Chrome, floating acrylic glass and ceramic accents sourced from the US converge with the splashes of water.

BY CATHY SALDAÑA-NOLIDO
Contributor

PHOTOS BY **CHITO VECINA**
VISUAL CONCEPT BY **ALBERT AVELLANA**
PAGEDESIGN BY **LYNETT VILLARIBA**

LUXURIOUS in dimensions describes this condo unit, owned by broadcaster Atom Henares. Interior design wizards Ivy and Cynthia Almario stretch all possibilities by enriching it with wit and intense detailing.

In this Rockwell pad, the new moderns are deliberately laid out. It's a design and lifestyle statement that reflects the pace of life and the preferences of its owner without sacrificing coherence. In clean fashion, it translates the neo-modern approach, with Milanese and Asian sensibilities. To achieve a brightly adorned space, Ivy and Cynthia used a palette of colors in patterns that excite and surprise.

The excitement moves from room to room, governed by the theme of destination. Traditional idioms are debunked in favor of unexpected ideas. Small furniture is not necessarily for small rooms. Intimacy is enhanced through the introduction of wonderfully upholstered furniture, richly lined in wood, forming cocoons of luxury in embracing spaces.

The Almario sisters did the shopping for Atom, putting together layers of ideas and objects sourced mostly from San Francisco. The mixture of hues from the Armani palette of colors consists of camel, sand and alabaster. Cream dominates, as well as hints of white, in sync with vibrant colors and metallic touches. Wenge wood finishes are matched with limed oak, providing a pristine arrangement of finishes for accents and art objects.

Atom is very much in step with good design. Conscious of the trends yet aware of the classics, he left much of the decision-making to the Almario sisters and gave instructions if needed. Kept busy by his varied commitments—from television to radio NU 107; from interests in palm oil to power supply—Atom prefers a clean, spare look to enhance relaxation. It is comfort much deserved. A row of portraits of him and his brothers lines one wall as a prized Arturo Luz painting graciously dominates another. A bold statement in canvas is the Hechanova painting that he inherited from his mother.

Together, these artworks and other *objets d'art* place his signature in the rooms. He laughingly points out to a pair of onyx sculptures that he fondly calls his "pair of sperms." A favored Orlina sculpture is given a position of elegance on the glass coffee table in the living area.

Meditative displays of Milanese objects and décor are lit up amid a limed oak shelving system on the wall. Light floods the perimeters, providing a sensuous atmosphere, with brilliant reflections on chrome and glass cut in corners and on the legs of tables. The forms are familiarly retro but contemporary.

While objects and décor have been sourced mostly from abroad, much of the furniture and finishing materials have been bought locally. A collaboration with suppliers, furniture makers and craftsmen made the interiors glimmer with surprises.

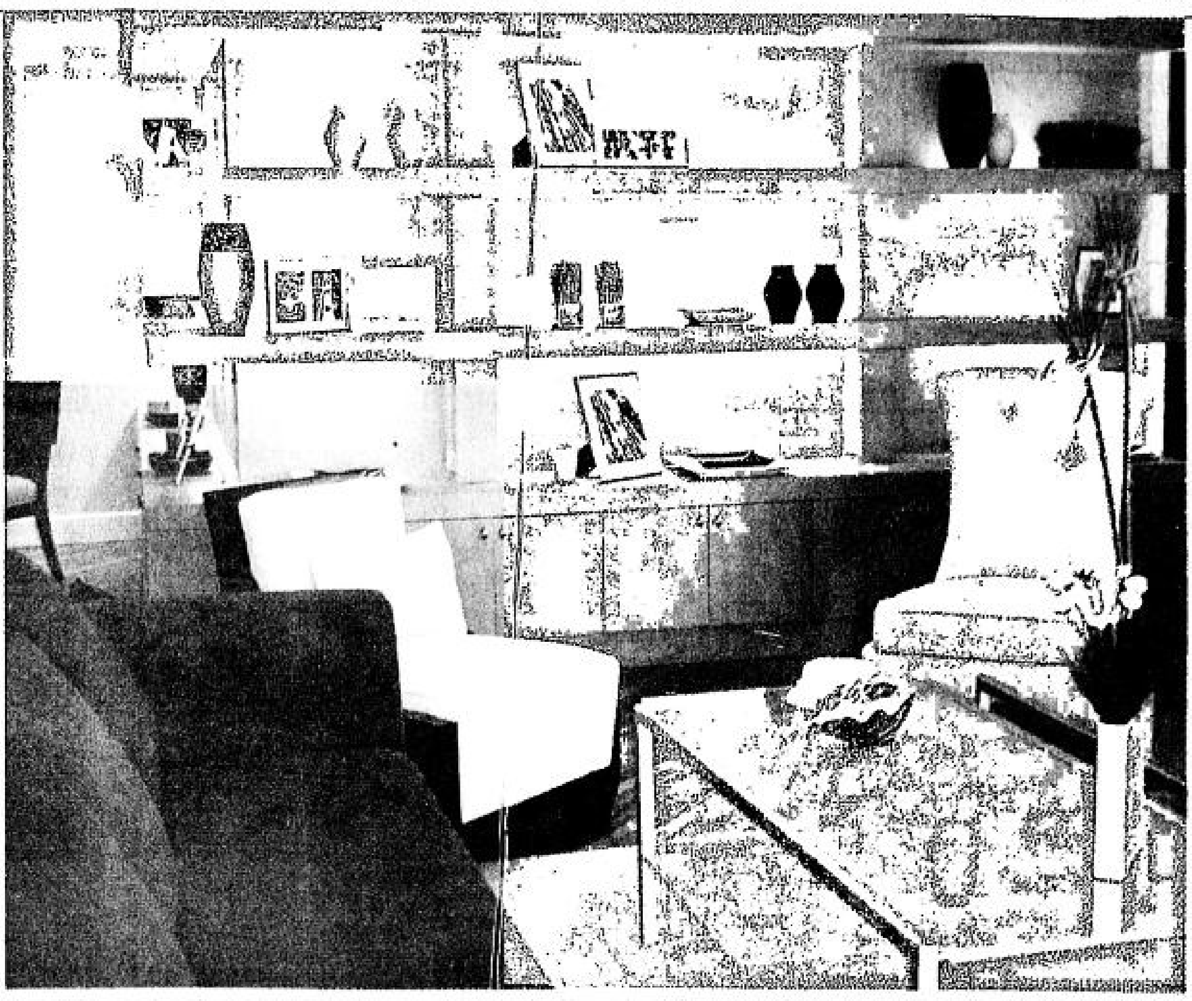
On the dining table, a set of china and flatware is matched with a colorful painting on the wall. The tropical flavor is enhanced by the sleekness of the dining chairs, slim and upholstered for the square shaped area that comfortably sits a group of 4 to 6.

Mirrors reflect the table to increase the space. Silhouette blinds line the curvilinear wall. The experience of living in the pad is heightened with excellent power vistas that a Rockwell unit can provide.

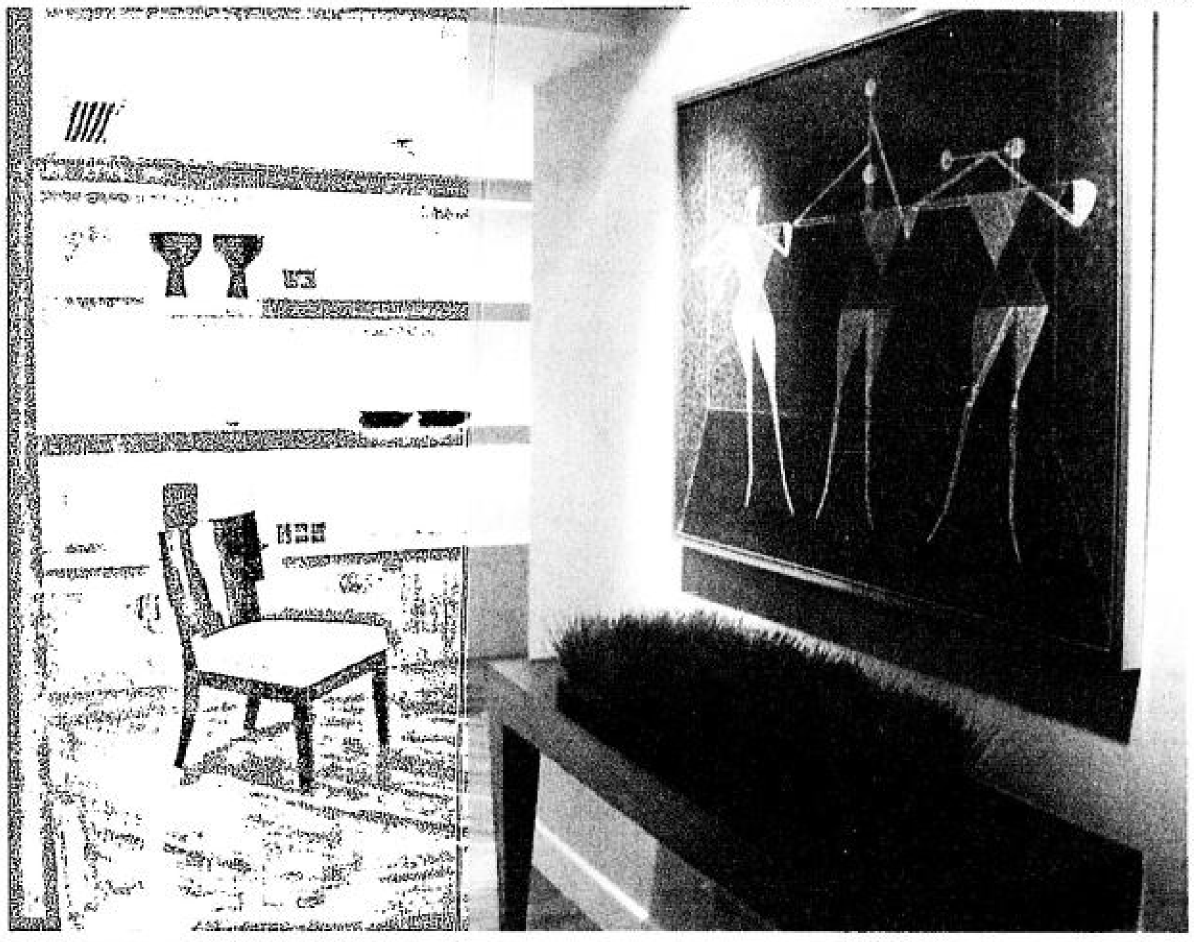
Atom derives his energy from a balanced life, matched by his interests in business and his love for food, travel and leisure, constantly surrounded by the company of family and friends. In this magnificent space that he now calls home, he will certainly be more than just charged. It will be his own cradle for personal pampering, a nest for relaxation, with excellent destination corners for recharging himself.

Surging with the power of clean lines and richly laid interiors, the flat stirs the senses into a state of excitement. It provides afternoons in the veranda and quiet dinners on the round table, relaxing evenings in front of the entertainment center and pampered hours of sleep on soft, richly lined beds. It is a cradle that rocks and excites, a nest that lifts and balances an energetic man's life.

E-mail the author at cnolido@aimonline.org



A SUCCESSFUL experiment in limed oak finish has resulted in a shelf display that allows personal collections to shine forth in a tapestry of light and brilliance. Plexiglas, metal and wood are framed to perfection.



ONLY a prized Arturo Luz canvas can grace the foyer wall, here balanced by an arrangement in lush greenery by Cynthia Almario.

PLAYING with the existing lines of the Rockwell ceiling, following the structural vestiges with a design intention that pulsates with light and pristine color, the design clarity is achieved for a contemporary and spare look, exemplifying the neo-moderns with verve.

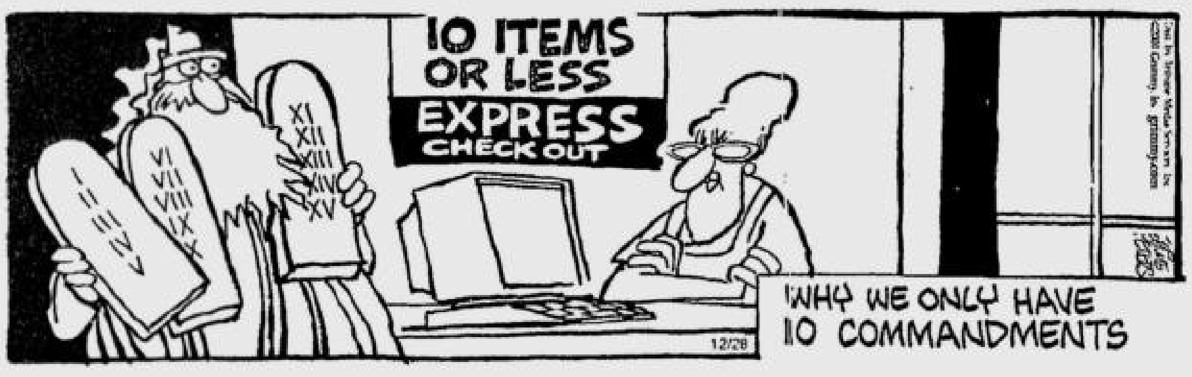
HARMONIOUS is the spread of influences that the designs have picked up—an East-meets-West approach in a contemporary motion. The result is clean, spare, touched by modern sensibility and yet so much warmed by Asian charms.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

COMIC Relief

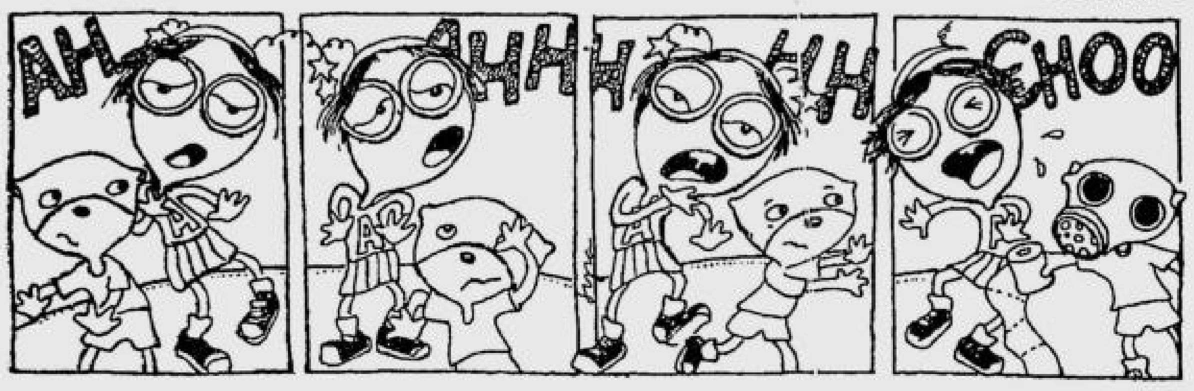
MOTHER GOOSE & GRIMM

BY MIKE PETERS


10 ITEMS OR LESS
EXPRESS CHECK OUT
I II III IV V
VI VII VIII IX X
XI XII XIII XIV XV
WHY WE ONLY HAVE 10 COMMANDMENTS
12/28

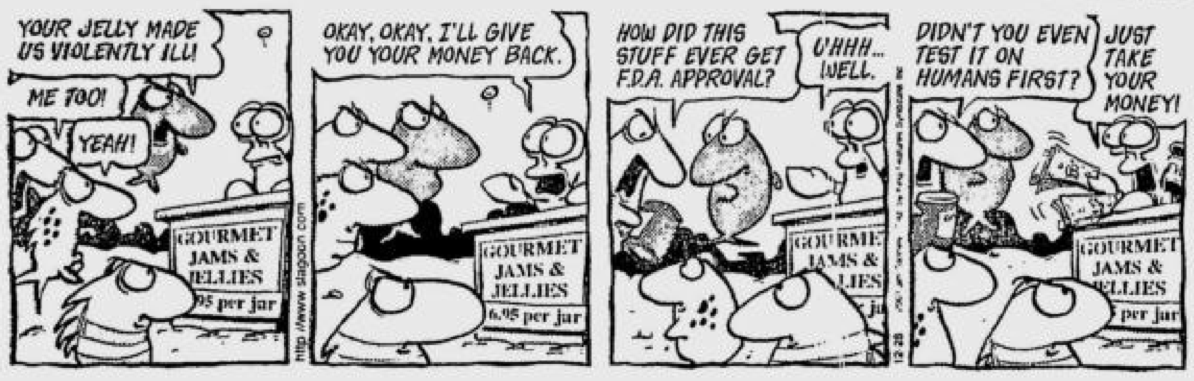
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO



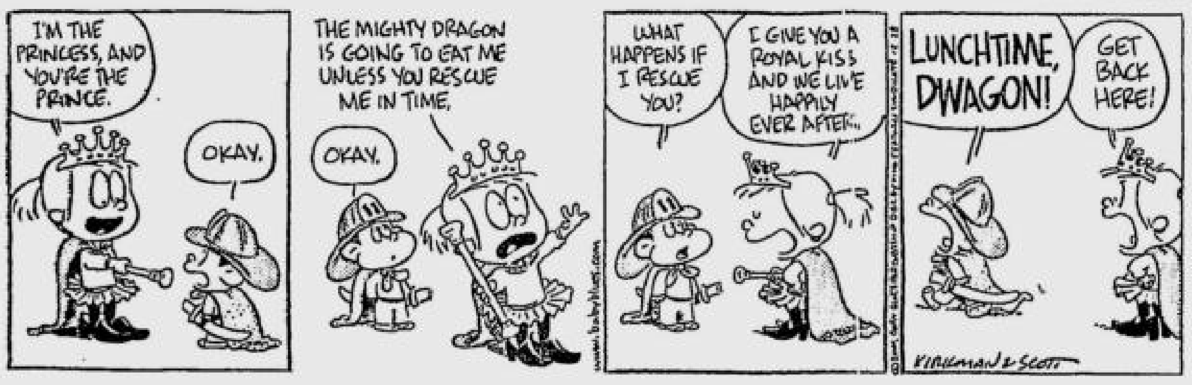
SHERMAN'S LAGOON

BY JIM TOOMEY


YOUR JELLY MADE US VIOLENTLY ILL!
ME TOO!
YEAH!
GOURMET JAMS & JELLIES .95 per jar
OKAY, OKAY. I'LL GIVE YOU YOUR MONEY BACK.
GOURMET JAMS & JELLIES 6.95 per jar
HOW DID THIS STUFF EVER GET F.D.A. APPROVAL?
UHHH... WELL.
DIDN'T YOU EVEN TEST IT ON HUMANS FIRST?
JUST TAKE YOUR MONEY!
http://www.slagoon.com
12-28

BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


I'M THE PRINCESS, AND YOU'RE THE PRINCE.
OKAY.
THE MIGHTY DRAGON IS GOING TO EAT ME UNLESS YOU RESCUE ME IN TIME.
OKAY.
WHAT HAPPENS IF I RESCUE YOU?
I GIVE YOU A ROYAL KISS AND WE LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER.
LUNCHTIME, DWAGON!
GET BACK HERE!
www.babyblues.com
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

HOROSCOPE

BY EUGENIA LAST

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Joe Diffie, Maggie Smith, Edgar Winter

Happy Birthday: Protect yourself and your interests. You will have some terrific ideas but stop talking and start doing. Opportunities are evident but only if you are quick to do something about them. Your numbers are 19, 26, 33, 35, 41, 47

ARIES (March 21-April 19): This can turn out to be your lucky day. Not everyone will be focused on professional matters but if you are, you can make headway.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Someone may try to force you into making a decision but if you really aren't sure, don't do it. Ask friends for assistance regarding these matters.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): You may find it difficult to keep your personal thoughts to yourself. Be prepared to back up what you say with facts. Someone will definitely question your motives and your logic.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Take into account all the little extras you were hoping to finish before year-end and plan your day carefully.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): You will find it easier to enforce your New Year's resolution a couple of days early so that by the time the New Year rolls in you will be well on your way to being successful.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Don't put up with individuals who are being difficult for no apparent reason. You must follow your instincts and refuse to let anyone bring you down.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): You will be in a great position to tie up loose ends and prepare for the year ahead. Your ability to speak eloquently today should ensure successful meetings.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): You will be able to help a colleague today. Your generous offer will be an act of faith and will bring you a much-needed ally in the future.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-DecC. 21): You may not see things too clearly when it comes to your financial picture. If you overspend you will be sorry when the New Year rolls in.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Relax and prepare for the upcoming events. Too much talk will put you in a poor position when the year comes to a close.

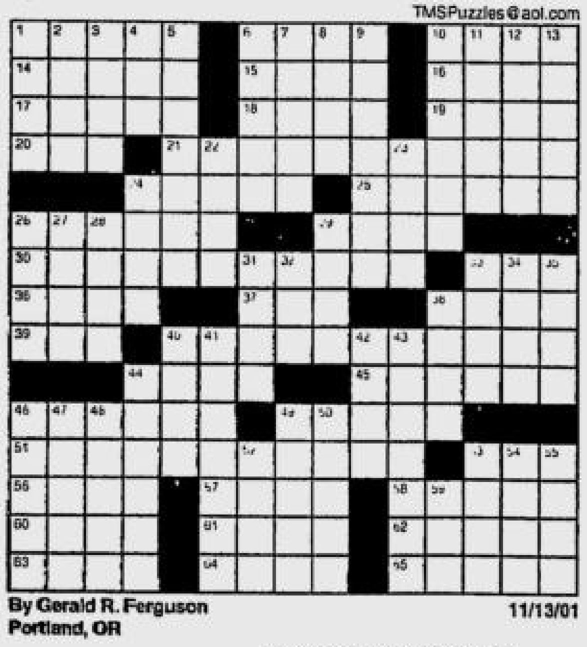
AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): You can talk your way into anything today. Romantic opportunities will be present, so don't hesitate to ask out the man/woman you love.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): You may want to stay put today. The less interaction you have the better. You should really catch up on all the paperwork you've been putting off.

Birthday Baby: You are a self-starter and are ingenious, coming up with your own creative ideas and putting them into play with ease. You will surprise those around you throughout your life with your ability to do whatever is necessary.

DAILY CROSSWORD

TMSPuzzles@aol.com



By Gerald R. Ferguson
Portland, OR

11/13/01

ACROSS
1 Government's due
6 Current units, for short
10 Paddock papa
14 Second-largest Great Lake
15 Far from plump
16 Home of Paris
17 Shiraz resident
18 Carson's successor
19 Trendy fashion
20 Vote against
21 Unnamed author
24 Striped gem
25 Producers
26 In a class by ___
29 Author Grey
30 Mole in place
33 Soar
36 Aoki of the links
37 NYC subway line
38 Surface size
39 Booming jet
40 Game of stealth
44 Spelunker's milieu
45 Diners
46 1998 Masters winner
49 Graph starter?
51 Anthropological mystery
53 Luau dish
56 Off. underling
57 Warm up
58 Cairo's country
60 Canine command
61 Not taken in by
62 Smashing Monica
63 "Rule Britannia" composer
64 Winchester's rival
65 Minuscule

DOWN
1 Slender
2 Enveloping glow
3 Reveal the inner man?
4 Mighty long time
5 Fish for eels
6 Mete out
7 Reagan cabinet member
8 Hyperventilate
9 Frosty, e.g.
10 Umpire's call
11 Enraged
12 Mudd or Moore
13 Oglers
22 Rake handle
23 Go on a tirade
24 Dynamic leader?
26 Wife/sister of Osiris
27 Kinski title role
28 Jazz singing
29 Greek letter
31 Assistant
32 U. tests
33 Unrestrained
34 Wolfish look
35 Asian oxen
38 Concerning
40 Spy Mata
41 Scott hero
42 Dodge model
43 Maximally damp
44 Elsinore or Balmoral
46 City on the Missouri
47 Scrooge
48 City on the Ruhr
49 Noted Greek
50 Discover by chance
52 Swell guy
53 "Gomer ___, USMC"
54 Bid first
55 ___-bitsy
59 $1,000

PREVIOUS PUZZLE ANSWER

A	R	T	S		I	N	U	S	E		B	E	A	T
C	O	R	E		N	I	S	A	N		O	L	G	A
T	O	O	T		K	E	N	S	T	A	B	L	E	R
S	T	Y		Y	W	C	A		R	U	S	S	E	T
		A	I	M	E	E		C	A	L	L			
S	P	I	R	A	L		S	L	I	D	E	W	A	Y
W	A	K	E		L	I	K	E	N		D	A	R	E
I	S	M				M	A	T				R	I	A
R	E	A	L		R	A	T	E	D		B	R	A	T
L	O	N	E	S	O	M	E		O	G	R	E	S	S
			G	O	D	S		C	L	E	A	N		
A	C	C	U	S	E		W	A	L	L		M	R	S
J	O	E	M	O	N	T	A	N	A		P	O	E	T
A	R	N	E		T	O	L	E	R		B	O	N	O
R	A	T	S		S	E	E	R	S		S	N	O	W

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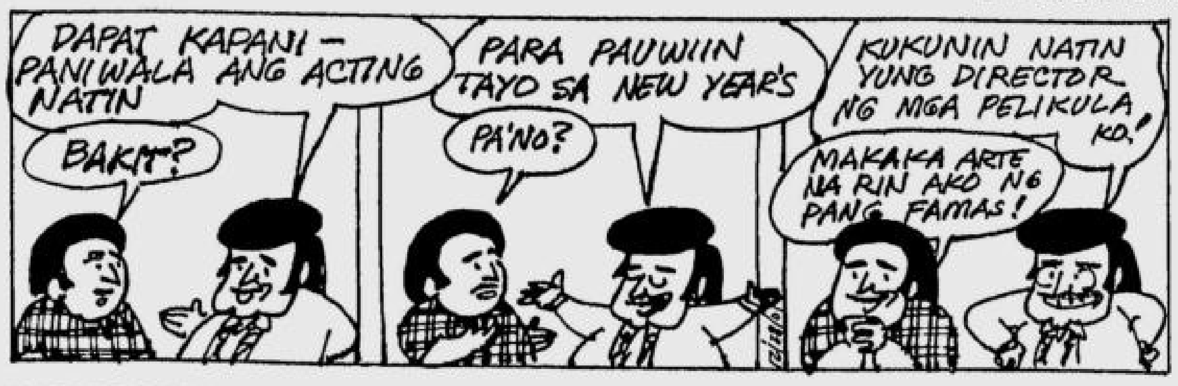
11/13/01

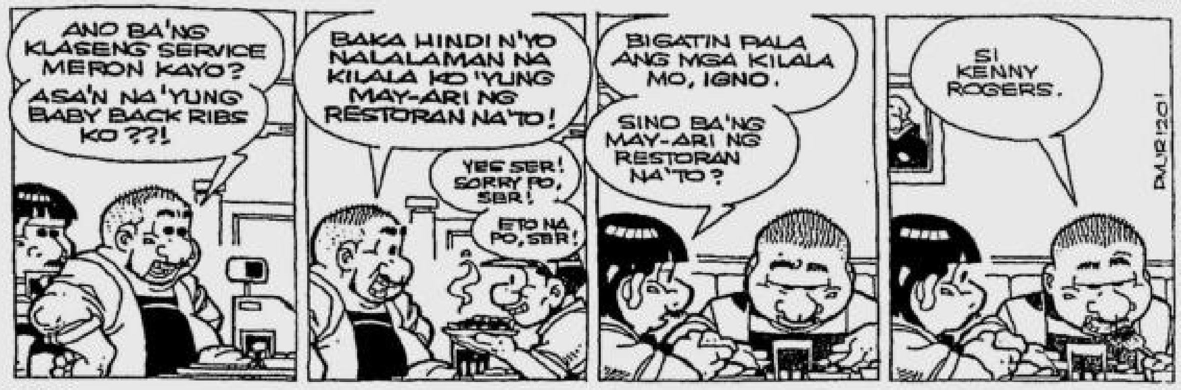
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


DAPAT KAPANI-PANIWALA ANG ACTING NATIN
BAKIT?
PARA PAUWIIN TAYO SA NEW YEAR'S
PA'NO?
KUKUNIN NATIN YUNG DIRECTOR NG MGA PELIKULA KO!
MAKAKA ARTE NA RIN AKO NG PANG FAMAS!

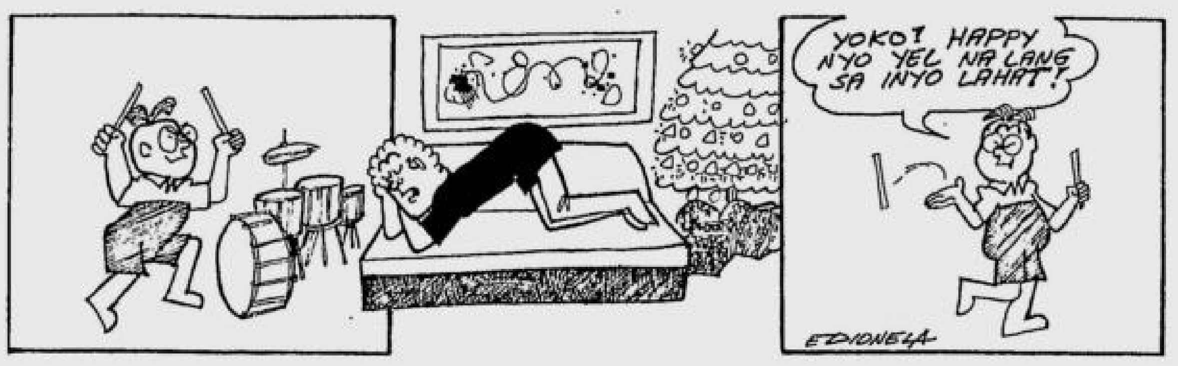
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


ANO BA'NG KLASENG SERVICE MERON KAYO?
ASA'N NA 'YUNG BABY BACK RIBS KO??!
BAKA HINDI N'YO NALALAMAN NA KILALA KO 'YUNG MAY-ARI NG RESTORAN NA'TO!
YES SER! SORRY PO, SER!
ETO NA PO, SER!
BIGATIN PALA ANG MGA KILALA MO, IGNO.
SINO BA'NG MAY-ARI NG RESTORAN NA'TO?
SI KENNY ROGERS.
PMJR12/01

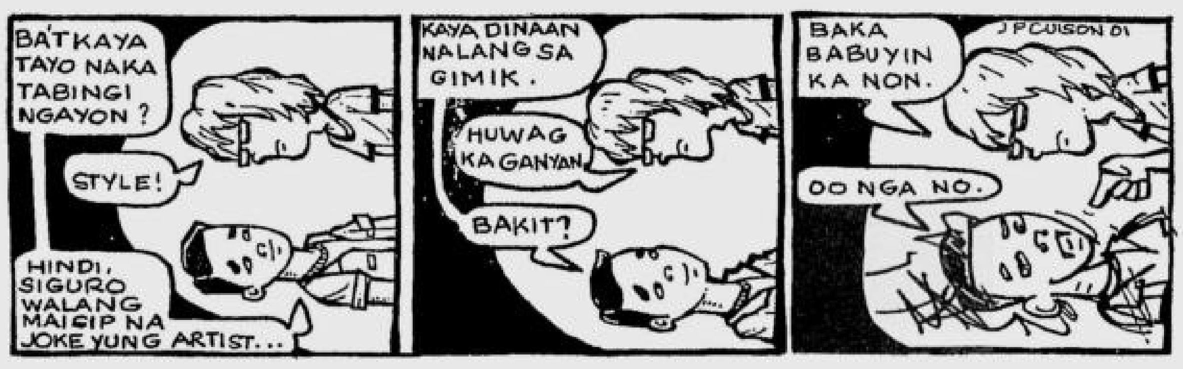
SIMO

BY EDGAR DIONELA


YOKO! HAPPY NYO YEL NA LANG SA INYO LAHAT!
EDIONELA

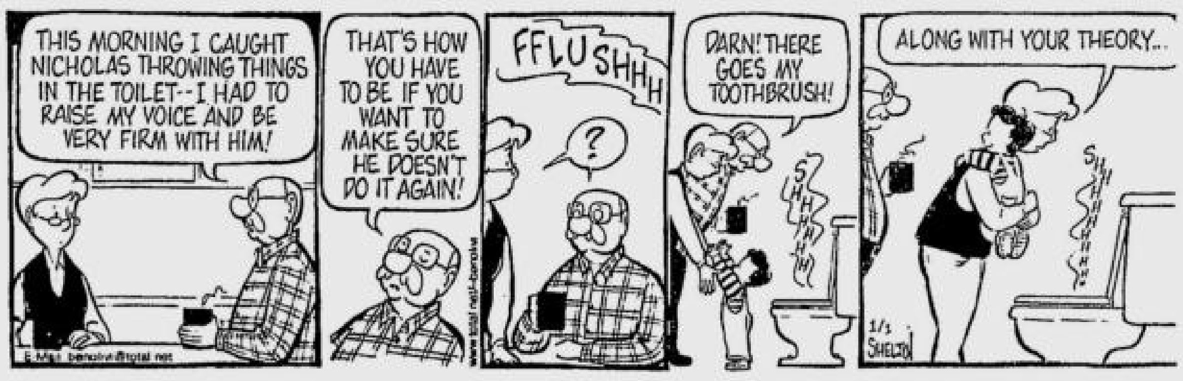
GARAPATA BLOOD

BY JOHN PAUL CUISON


BA'T KAYA TAYO NAKA TABINGI NGAYON?
STYLE!
HINDI, SIGURO WALANG MAISIP NA JOKE YUNG ARTIST...
KAYA DINAAN NALANG SA GIMIK.
HUWAG KA GANYAN.
BAKIT?
BAKA BABUYIN KA NON.
OO NGA NO.
J P CUISON 01

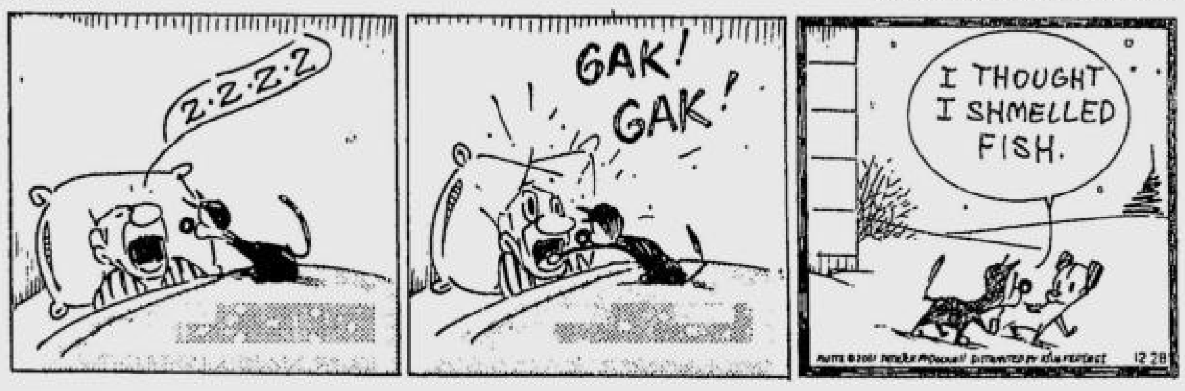
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


THIS MORNING I CAUGHT NICHOLAS THROWING THINGS IN THE TOILET--I HAD TO RAISE MY VOICE AND BE VERY FIRM WITH HIM!
THAT'S HOW YOU HAVE TO BE IF YOU WANT TO MAKE SURE HE DOESN'T DO IT AGAIN!
FFLUSHHH
?
DARN! THERE GOES MY TOOTHBRUSH!
SHHHHH
ALONG WITH YOUR THEORY...
1/1
SHELTON

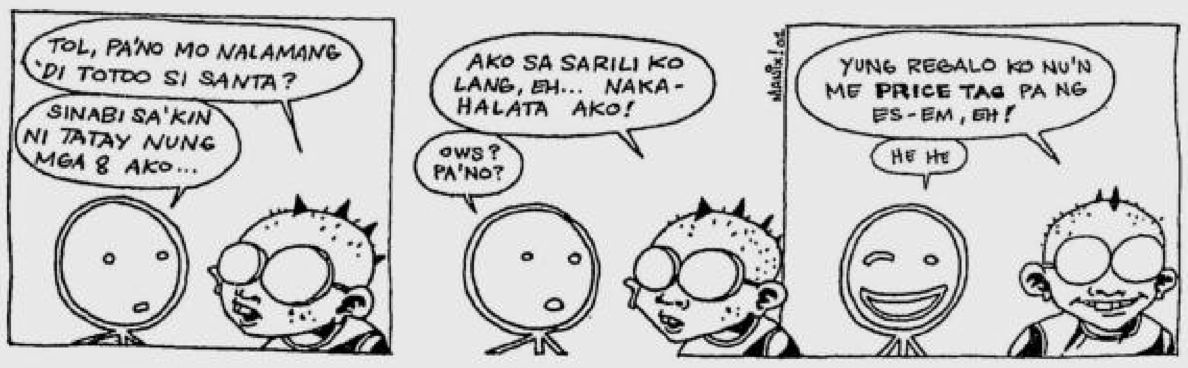
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


Z-Z-Z-Z
GAK! GAK!
I THOUGHT I SHMELLED FISH.
12-28

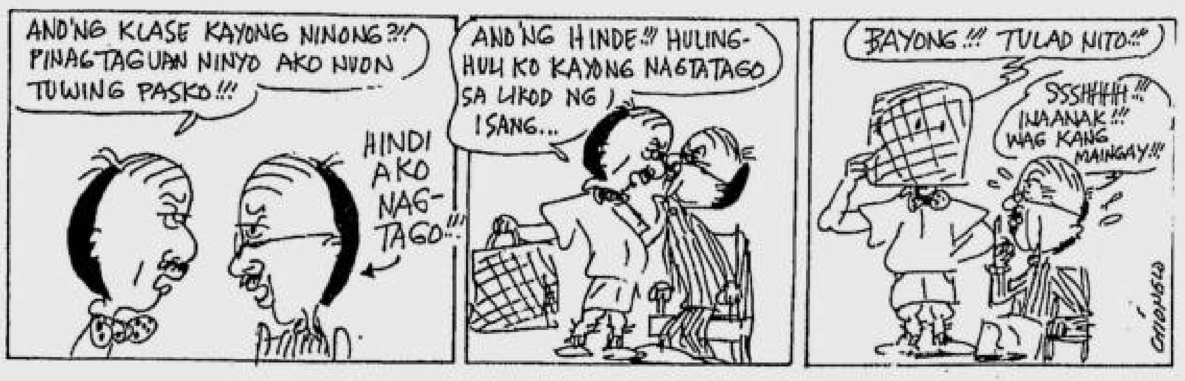
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


TOL, PA'NO MO NALAMANG 'DI TOTOO SI SANTA?
SINABI SA'KIN NI TATAY NUNG MGA 8 AKO...
AKO SA SARILI KO LANG, EH... NAKA-HALATA AKO!
OWS? PA'NO?
YUNG REGALO KO NU'N ME PRICE TAG PA NG ES-EM, EH!
HE HE
MANIX! 01

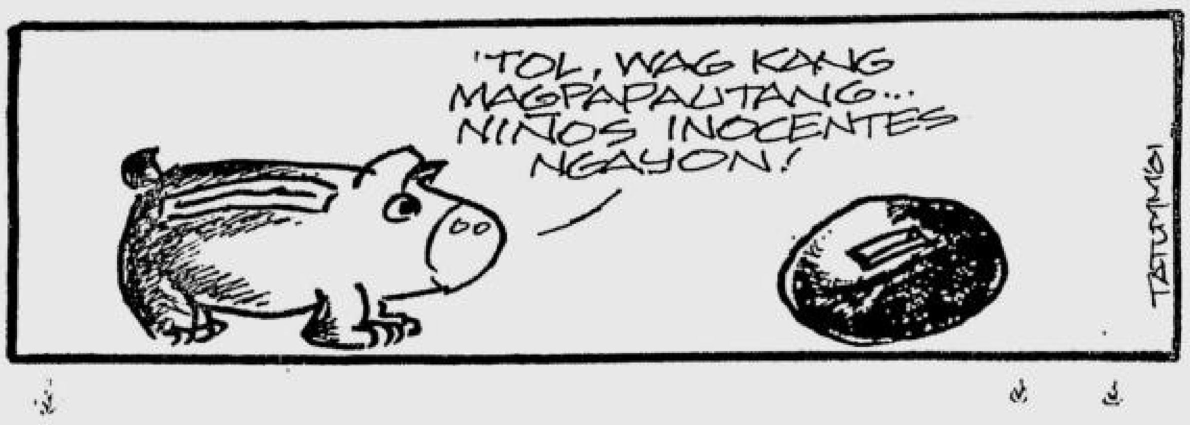
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


AND'NG KLASE KAYONG NINONG?!! PINAGTAGUAN NINYO AKO NUON TUWING PASKO!!!
HINDI AKO NAGTAGO!!!
AND'NG HINDE!!! HULING-HULI KO KAYONG NAGTATAGO SA LIKOD NG ISANG...
BAYONG!!! TULAD NITO!!!
SSSHHHH!!! INAANAK!!! WAG KANG MAINGAY!!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU & TATUM MILAMBILING


'TOL, WAG KANG MAGPAPAUTANG... NIÑOS INOCENTES NGAYON!
TATUM 01

Alexander the Chaste

(From page C2)

what tomorrow's going to bring."

Aquino said that in modeling, pressure from peers and the emphasis on image were overwhelming. "If you don't have a good head on your shoulder or if you don't know if you're grounded, you get involved with anything. It helps me maintain professionalism in my relationships."

In India, the judges could feel his spiritual aura without him broadcasting his beliefs. "I'd rather let them see the qualities of Christ in my life than I having to explain it. I don't expect everyone to accept my beliefs."

Power of purity

One of his beliefs is maintaining chastity until marriage to establish a proper link with God. So where does sex fit into the picture?

"Whoa? Well, being a Christian, it doesn't fit into the picture. I'm waiting for marriage. Many believe that sex is a nonchalant thing. It's kinda like breathing. My Christian faith is more important to me than anything in the world. It's more important to me to live the way God wants me to live my life."

Once, in a typical man talk, his fellow models were shocked when Aquino revealed that he was still a virgin at the age of 30. "I explained my ideals. They respected me for that. In the States I have lots of friends my age who are still virgins. They are Christians."

Aquino is aware of the consequences of a sexual relationship out of wedlock. "My focus is more on the long-term than the short term."

His previous relationships were with renewed Christian girls who shared the same beliefs, standards and same morals. "It's more important that the right girl must have the same Christian beliefs as I have," he said. Being politically correct, he added, "I wouldn't say that Filipinas don't have a chance. I haven't met the right one."

It's quite admirable for Aquino to be open about his principles. In today's society, chastity has fallen into disrepute because it is seen in connection with "thou shall nots." Today, religion is viewed as a repressive system that frowns on anything that people consider pleasurable. Chastity, because it is linked to religion, is perceived as self-denial and prudery rather than as a powerful means of achieving personal freedom and independence.

But Aquino has benefited from chastity. "Purity has spared me from a lot of junk in my life. It saved me from a lot of bad experiences and costly mistakes that could have happened along the way. It was a protective power more than anything else," he said.

"It's God's timing as well," Alex added. "At 30, I can see where I want to go. I know the industry is not my biggest priority. I can take it or leave it. It starts with God and everything else just picks up. I just show up."

Aquino admitted that temptations are hard to control. "Models here are discreet," he said. "In other places I've been to, they are not so discreet. Once you've looked, you're hooked and you're stuck. You have to know in your mind what you're doing is for God. Otherwise you fall and screw yourself over."

Although the future may still seem unpredictable to Aquino, one thing is for sure. His triumph in the Mr. International contest is an indication that the standard ideals of beauty in the 21st century are no longer based on superficial values but on transparency before God.

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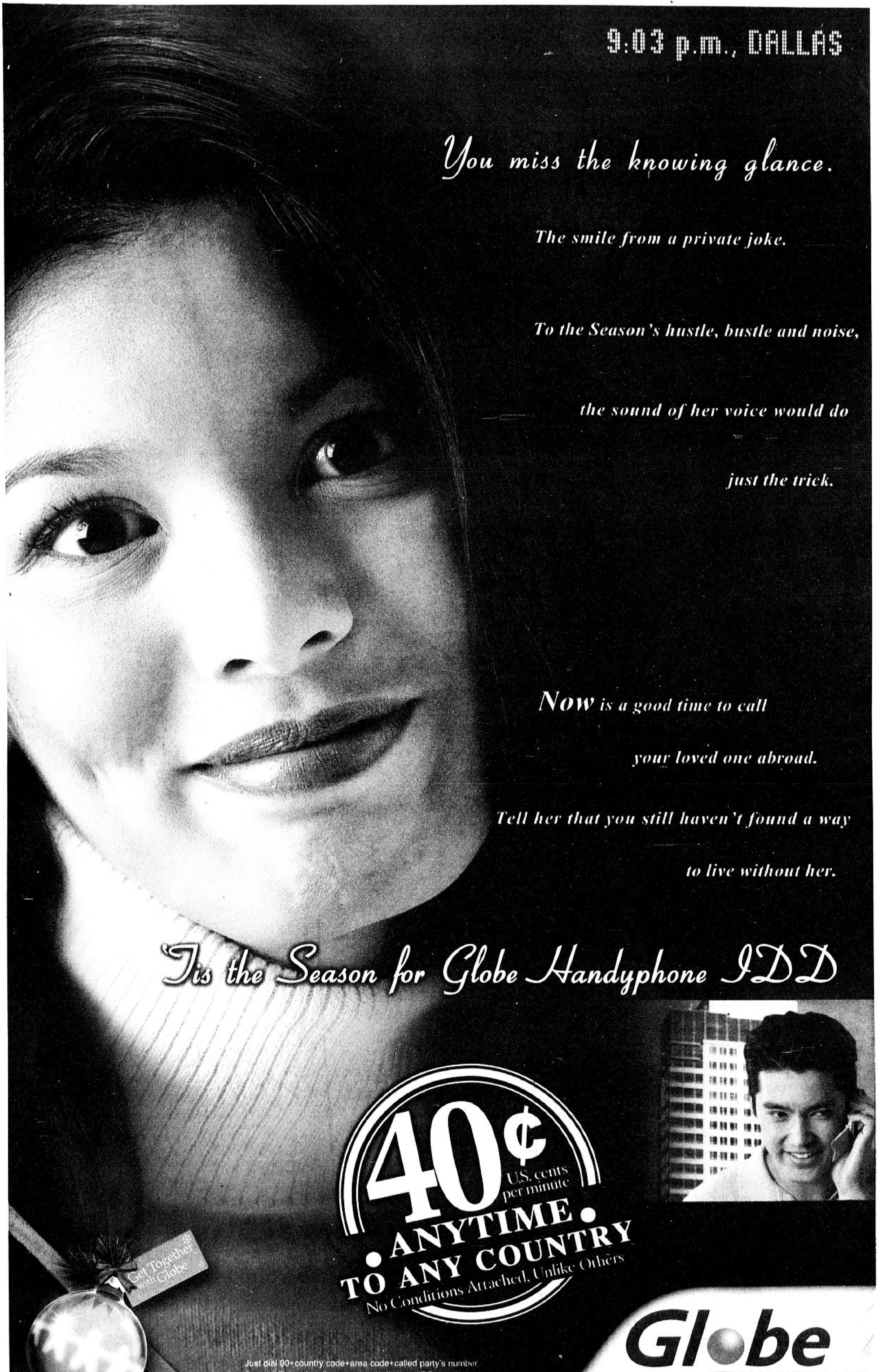

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LIFESTYLE
Trend Spotting

That year 2001 mindset

LIFE-STYLED

Thelma Sioson San Juan

ON CHRISTMAS Eve, bound for home in the south from Quezon City, we chose to take Roxas Boulevard for I hoped to show my mall-conditioned kids the holiday lights down the strip, that Christmas sparkle of old that gives your heart a lift as your eyes sweep in the rainbow colors of the *parols* unfolding down the horizon. We saw nothing. No colorfully lit *parols*, except the token clusters at Rizal Park. No Christmas lights, except the intermittent ones in business establishments.

Roxas Boulevard was dark, the first time I think it's been in years. And the promenade by the bay looked older, seedier and more pathetic than ever.

I remember once, in the early '90s, the strip was the site of a big New Year's Eve bash. Closed to traffic, it was lined with stalls that sold food and gifts and staged shows. Promenaders filled the strip running from the US embassy to the CCP as they awaited the fireworks display greeting the New Year. People would stroll from Remedios Circle in Malate, which had al fresco cafés, to greet the New Year, to the strip, and back.

No big chance of that happening this time. The Roxas Boulevard strip looks godforsaken, repossessed by scavenger carts and homeless people. It looks war-devastated compared to the bayside promenade of Hanoi; you

THAT/ p.D3

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See fireworks light up the night sky.

Fireworks shows at Ayala Center Makati every Friday at 8 pm and every Saturday and Sunday at 7 pm until December 30 at the Glorietta 4 Park. At the Alabang Town Center, it's on every Saturday and Sunday at 7 pm until Dec. 30 at the Town Plaza. At the Ayala Center Cebu, see the lights at 8 pm on Dec. 16 and 23 in the lagoon area.

EXTENDED MALL HOURS:

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Dec. 14-22 (10 am to 10 pm)
Dec. 23 (10 am to 12 mn)

Alabang Town Center
Dec. 14-22 (11 am to 9 pm weekdays/10 am to 10 pm weekends)
Dec. 23 (10 am to 12 mn)

Ayala Center Cebu
Dec. 19-21 (10 am to 9 pm)
Dec. 22-23 (10 am to 10 pm)

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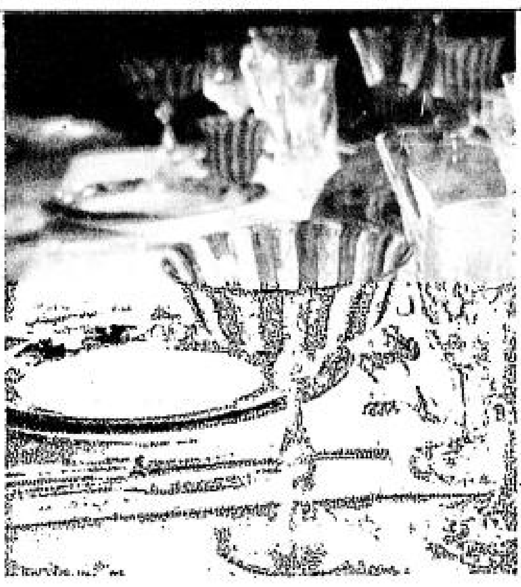


TIFFANY sterling silver bucket gives the classic look a modern touch.

NEW YEAR DINNER. Pasta, roast duck, fresh fruits and fish

Not just another New Year's Eve dinner

Margarita Araneta-Fores, the woman behind Cibo and gracious Malacañang dinners, goes tastefully old-fashioned to welcome the new

By Marge C. Enriquez
Photos by Chito Vecina
Visual concept by Albert Avellana

IN 1987 Margarita Araneta Fores became a curiosity in the culinary world for being a patrician who ended up in the kitchen. I first met her in late 1987 at the Hyatt when she did a redux of a food festival. Early that year, Doreen Fernandez raved over Margarita's innovation. She charmed people with her childlike candor and simplicity.

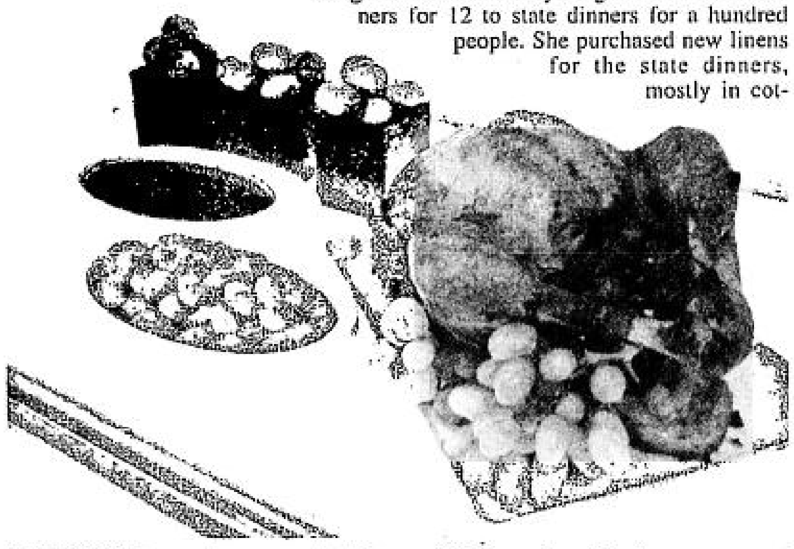
In the first five years of her career, the media focused on Margarita's elegant and independent-minded style of clothing. Although she never followed the dictates of Vogue, she exuded subtle but polished taste. Over time as she got more serious with her career, she became noticed for her achievements as a chef and restaurateur. Together with the likes of Gene Gonzalez, she inspired a younger generation of chefs. Ten years after Margarita's culinary debut, she opened Cibo. Next year, Cibo will open its fourth branch at the SM Megamall Strip.

Presidential dinners

As Margarita approaches her 15th year in the business, she uses her talent to cater to Malacañang, her way of serving the country. She says the discipline of catering in the presidential palace has pushed her crew's service standards to a higher level.

"The President is serious. She doesn't go for ceremonies. Her meals must be quick. She wants to go back to work," says Margarita. Therefore, the meal service should be planned and executed with clockwork precision.

Margarita has done everything from intimate dinners for 12 to state dinners for a hundred people. She purchased new linens for the state dinners, mostly in cotton damask because they are as much elegant as washable and durable. She hardly uses white. The table is laden with the Palace's own flatware and stemware.



***TACCGUBI** arrosto* or roast turkey with focaccia, dried orange peel and chestnut stuffing with sidings of parched baby oranges and green grapes

CLASSICAL setting fit for Malacañang is composed of heirloom silverware and china purchased in an estate sale.

NEW Year at Cibo maintains the prosperity theme with round fruits, bowls and plates.

The meals showcase the best of Philippine produce. Margarita's menus consist of international dishes with local touches such as pasta with red eggs and fish roe from Capiz, with lots of *kesong puti*. *Sukang Iloko* is used as dressing and *sigarillas* as vegetable side dish. *Dulce gatas* and dried mangos are served for dessert. Margarita uses Batangas tenderloin instead of imported meat and *pugo* or quail egg as an appetizer or pasta topping. *Kangkong* is made into a cream sauce on pasta, drizzled with olive oil. While others import flowers from Holland and Hong Kong, Margarita adorns the tables with tropical orchids and homegrown mums. For a Christmas party the squashes are carved into flower vases. "After the event you can make *pinakbet*, so nothing goes to waste," she says.

"Catering for Malacañang is done out of civic spirit," Margarita says. "It's a privilege to be in the midst of history and to serve the President and her guests."

Two settings

For the INQUIRER, Margarita prepared two settings, one fit for Malacañang, the other for a mall.

When Margarita first made a New Year setting for INQUIRER in December 1996, she focused on round foods. This time, she's going old-fashioned, much like the lifestyle trend.

In an estate sale Margarita discovered English china with Florentine patterns.

"I love old things, regardless of their condition," she says. She likens the patina of antique to age spots; they both lend character.

For the New Year dinner, Margarita prepared a meal consisting of ingredients that represent good luck in 2002—round fruits and profiteroles, a roasted bird and noodles for long life. The main course was the roast duck stuffed with dried figs and applies and adorned with fresh plum, apples and *kiat-kat*. The linguini was laden with anchovies and Margarita's trademark yellow pepper and cream. The *lapu-lapu* in *cartoccio* was flavored with tomato, onions and fennel. Her version of the *bottarga* Filipina is fish roe from Capiz, cooked in parchment.

For dessert, it's a rich combination of baby profiteroles around a fresh mound of whipped mascarpone with strawberries caramelized in brandy. This delicacy is rich but not too sweet.

During New Year's Eve the family celebrates Mass and holds dinner. Family events usually revolve around the grand matriarch, Ester Araneta or Wawa, who is 90 years old.

Minimalist

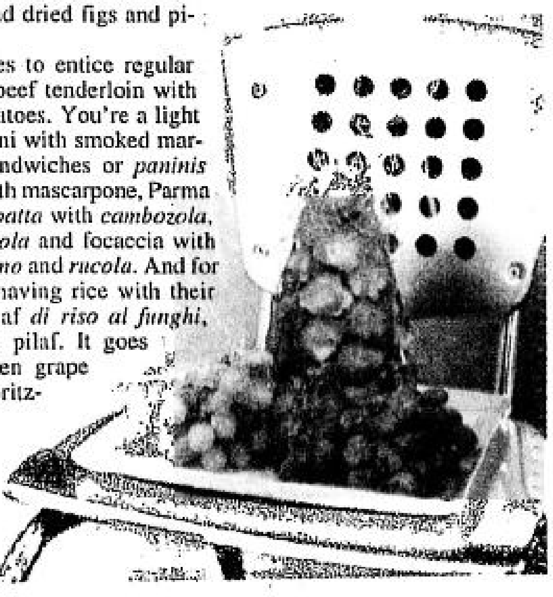
Contrasting this setting is the look Margarita is known for: the square plates, cubed vases and minimalist cutlery.

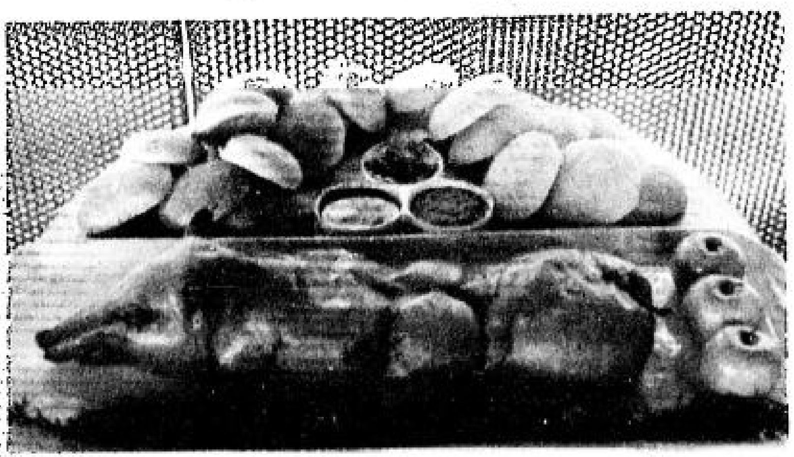
Instead of the *lechon kawali*, Margarita presents Cibo's version, the *porchetta* sandwich. In Italy's town fairs, deboned pork is flavored with garlic, rosemary and pepper and placed between crusty bread slices. Since Filipinos prefer their bread to be soft and spongy, Cibo gives the option of serving the *porchetta* with a hard or a soft roll, accompanied by three sauces: red wine liver sauce, stewed fruits such as apples, pears and dried figs and piquant tomatoes.

There are new dishes to entice regular patrons such as sliced beef tenderloin with melted *fontina* and tomatoes. You're a light eater? Try the spaghettini with smoked marlin and *rucola*. The sandwiches or *paninis* include Tuscan bread with mascarpone, Parma ham and dried figs, *ciabatta* with *cambozola*, smoked marlin and *rucola* and focaccia with air-dried beef, *parmigiano* and *rucola*. And for people who insist on having rice with their meals, Cibo offers pilaf *di riso al funghi*, mushroom and parsley pilaf. It goes well with red and green grape shakes and red wine spritzers.

Whether the setting is fit for Malacañang or a mall, expect originality and flair from Margarita.

CHRISTMAS *croquembuche*, a tower of profiteroles





***LECHON** kawali* with *porchetta* sandwich, accompanied by three sauces at Cibo

That year 2001 mindset

(From page D1)

don't even dare compare it to the strip of Singapore. When we visited Hanoi in the late '90s, we were impressed by its bayside promenade, which was clean and people-friendly; it teemed with promenaders, bikers and fitness buffs. And this was in a country ravaged by war for a generation. We didn't need a war to lose Roxas Boulevard; our mayors who couldn't care less about cultural heritage or the environment are all the catalysts of decay we needed. Now the mayors of Pasay and Manila, or the MMDA and DOT heads, didn't even bother to dress up the strip for Christmas.

A dark and neglected Roxas Boulevard on Christmas is one of the things we will remember the year 2001 by.

As news looks back on the events of 2001, tragedies to be sure, and fashion pins down the trends that swept consumers, we prefer to recall the mindsets and attitudes that defined 2001. For this year not only shaped but more so, challenged and redefined our long-held perspectives as well. To begin with, it tested our sanity and credulity, for it was a year when what we thought impossible or incredible, became possible. It saw the downfall of a President in a matter of days, and the collapse of a world landmark in a matter of minutes.

> We look back, not on events or trends, but on attitudes and perspectives that defined a year which challenged our sanity and faith

ILLUSTRATION: JED ESTRADA

Social barometer

In 2001, analysts, of whatever genius and expertise, lacked the tools to predict and project—be it in economics, politics or lifestyle. Instead, 2001 was the year our psyche was marked by the following:

- Uncertainty and vulnerability—of a degree we hadn't felt in years. After Edsa II, the mob attack of Malacañang and the WTC collapse in New York, we realized that certainty—with its attendant stability and confidence—is a luxury harder to feel each day. Nothing or no one is invulnerable. Certainly not us.
- People power—we enjoyed the high for a time, a very brief time.
- Values—we tried to fight for them, and the so-called civil society took shape around them. Reciting them was one thing; sustaining them, however, was another. At the end of the day, it's obvious our institutions do not nurture our values but, in fact, defeat them.
- Faith gained and lost again—that's the cycle of People Power.
- Paranoia—we've been caught in its swing the whole year round. **Rosebud**, one exposé after another, banner stories on narcopolitics and kidnappings were enough to turn us into a Prozac country, if the majority could afford Prozac.
- Manic-depressive—I've never heard this condition mentioned as often as I did this year, be it in romantic relationships or sales deals. People swing from high to low, and vice versa.
- Obsessive-compulsive—it goes with the above. If nothing else could push sales, certainly not the business climate, perhaps being obsessive-compulsive could. In 2001, "O-Cs" is another term for businessmen-entrepreneurs.
- Nostalgia—it didn't end with the recycled music and fashion from the '70s and '80s. **George Harrison** had to die, hurtling baby boomers and post-baby boomers down reality lane. I remember what **Jim Paredes** told me: "You always knew there'd never be a Beatles reunion. But now with George Harrison dead, you know there's really not gonna be one."

In a tribute to Harrison titled "All things must pass," Time put it so aptly: "The Beatles have been like a great clock. Year after year we have looked at them—at the aging of those faces, at the mellowing of their lives—to see what time it is for all of us. When one of them dies, the hour seems very late."

At a cocktail, we baby boomers got to talking about the Beatles' fateful visit in Manila—like what were we doing the day they performed at Rizal Memorial. **Bonjin Bolinao** said she saved up P5 just to be in the bleachers, screaming her head off for George. **Butch Dalisay** had the P5 all right, was on his way to Rizal with his mom—until his mom saw Cinerama (the state-of-the-art theater in those days) and the movie that was showing that afternoon, "The Battle of the Bulge." His mom changed her mind and opted for the movie instead, so Butch missed the Beatles for the "Battle."

When I told my kid Harrison had died that day, his brows shot up: "Mama, George who?" No use telling him that was the face I had plastered on my grade-seven locker. Nostalgia. No, simply age.

Living

- Text Christmas—this season, you didn't need to write or call. Just forward the message. Your finger got sore tapping all sorts of greeting messages. What business is left for Hallmark?
- Waiting—never had retail shop owners waited so patiently, as this year, for the shoppers to start flooding in. My retailer friend literally counted the days before Christmas, while keeping his fingers crossed and watching all signs of potential shopping momentum, including the road traffic.
- Hype is no might—I have fashion shows in mind here. This is the year the best-hyped shows went pfft.
- Individuality—You were what—and how—you mixed. Fashion went into romance—after years of minimalism and eclectic grunge, fashion predictably swung to the other end. There was no single predominant trend, but everything was in contrast to the vogue of years past. Romance was there in the soft, fluid, sheer fabrics, in the frills and ruffles, in the handcrafted artisanship, in the embroidery and every dainty ornamentation, in the svelte, clingy silhouettes and gossamer layers, in the strategic baring of skin. "Sex and the City," in short. This femininity combined the inspirations of the gypsy, the peasant blouses, the hippie, the Mod, the Middle Eastern exotica. You name it, there was an inspiration to suit every individual personality. More than ever, the individual style was king; fashion dictators have been long buried. Detailing spelled the difference. Accessorizing (especially belts) was again a must.
- Faith—this year we've seen how random death could be, how life is easily wasted or, in everyday scene, how business planning or target setting could be sideswiped so easily. When all human might is vulnerable and fallible, in the end faith is all you have.
- Ties that bind—at the end of the day, you seek home. Friends and family are your source of security and solace. Relationship is still the best medicine. If there's one thing the news of 2001 taught us to do, and this is not only for the devastated New Yorkers, it is to give our loved ones a hug every chance we get, for sometimes, there's no second chance.

I didn't mean to spoil your New Year. Happy New Year!

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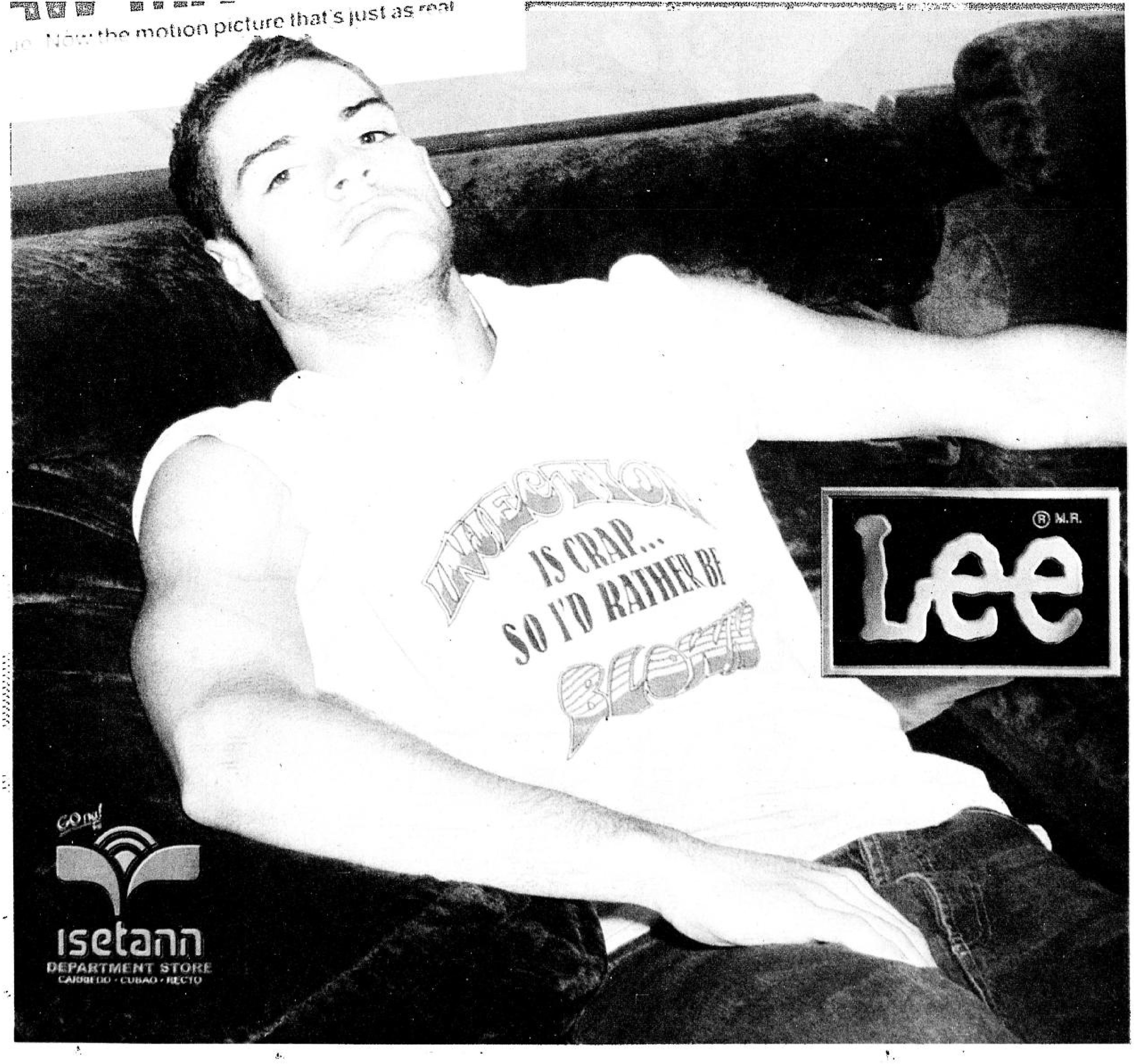
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